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## A Survey of Child Sex Tourism in the Philippines

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A Survey of Child Sex Tourism in the Philippines

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### **Abstract**

Child sex tourism is an obscure industry where the tourist's primary purpose is to engage in a sexual experience with a child. Under international legislation, tourism with the intent of having sexual relations with a minor is in violation of the UN Convention of the Rights of a Child. The intent and act is a crime and in violation of human rights. This paper examines child sex tourism in the Philippines, a major destination country for the purposes of child prostitution. The purpose is to bring attention to the atrocities that occur under the guise of tourism. It offers a definition of the crisis, a description of the victims and perpetrators, and a discussion of the social and cultural factors that perpetuate the problem. Research articles and reports from non-government organizations, advocacy groups, governments and educators were examined. Although definitional challenges did emerge, it was found that several of the articles and reports varied little in their definitions of child sex tourism and in the descriptions of the victims and perpetrators. A number of differences emerged that identified the social and cultural factors responsible for the creation and perpetuation of the problem.

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### **A Survey of Child Sex Tourism in the Philippines**

What was and is occurring under the pretext of tourism is atrocious. Since the 1980s sexual exploitation of children by tourists in developing countries has grown exponentially. During this time, in Southeast Asia, child sex tourism (CST) and child pornography was exposed and received widespread media attention around the world. In particular, a case in the Philippines emerged. In the tourist town of Pagsanjan, Laguna the authorities investigated 22 foreign male tourists suspected of the production of child pornography, drug abuse, and the sexual abuse of children (Protection Project, 2007; Trinidad, 2005). This case affected an estimated 590 children between the ages of 7 to 17 (Kreutz, 2002 as cited in Trinidad, 2005; Protection Project, 2007). Throughout the 1990s the Philippines, in addition to other international interests, were concerned with the extent that European, North American, Australian, Japanese, and Korean men were traveling to the country (and other developing nations) to engage in sex with children. It has been suggested that these activities were attributed to the nation's weak child protection laws and turbulent social and political conditions (O'Connell Davidson, 2004; O'Grady, 1992). Although countries like the Philippines have extended concern and developed legislation targeting CST, it is the work of advocacy groups around the globe that have brought attention to this disparaging subject.

Organizations like ECPAT International (End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children) and UNICEF have taken the lead in putting forward awareness and research about CST issues. Although these organizations have made efforts to extend CST research, investigating CST is problematic and the awareness of the problem remains abstruse. When discussed within the context of human trafficking and the sex trade, CST generally receives causal mention and little in-depth analysis. Furthermore, empirical evidence regarding the nature of and extent of the problem are minimal.

The purpose of this paper is to generate awareness of CST to researchers, educators, and the community-at-large who have limited knowledge of the phenomenon. It examines CST in the Philippines, a major destination country for the purposes of child prostitution. It addresses definitions, a description of the victims and perpetrators, and examines the determinants that perpetuate the problem.

Research articles and reports authored by various non-governmental organizations, advocacy groups, governments, and academic scholars were examined. The research questions that guided the survey were:

- (a) How is CST defined?
- (b) Who are the victims and tourists?
- (c) What is the scale of the problem?
- (d) What factors determine CST in the Philippines?

### **Child Sex Tourism Defined**

Defining CST pressures governments and corporations to identify tourists that prey on society's most vulnerable. Defining the problem compels these institutions to consider the moral and financial consequences of the actions of preying tourists. However, institutions with vested interests in the tourism industry hesitate to define and criminalize the habitual child sex tourist due to the lucrative industry of sex tourism. Exposing and prosecuting child sex tourists threatens a valuable revenue source that governments and businesses have come to depend on (Jeffreys, 1999), particularly in developing nations.

Views differ on whether adult sex tourism, which is legal in many countries, should be defined independently from CST. Jeffreys (1999) argues defining CST and adult sex tourism collectively. He suggests that for CST to be eliminated the sex tourism industry as a whole ought to be challenged. Likewise, O'Donnell Davidson (2004) suggests it is unclear if child sex tourism can be disconnected from sex tourism or tourism in general. The confusion surrounding this issue is attributed to the entanglement of CST within the traditional tourist industry. Although it is important to distinguish CST from the broader act of sex tourism, it is often difficult to do so (Montgomery, 2008; O'Connell Davidson, 2004). However, Tepelus (2008) argues that CST should be distinct from adult sex tourism because adult sex tourism and adult prostitution is not illegal across all jurisdictions. Despite these differences what is clear is that under international legislation tourism with the intent of having sexual relations with a minor is in violation of the UN Convention of the Rights of a Child, and of the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography (Tepelus, 2008).

Although literature varies on the need to differentiate CST from sex tourism, the discussion is imperative to create appropriate and meaningful terms. Definitions are significant as researchers and advocacy groups attempt to engage decision-makers in the fight against CST. The complexity of this debate signifies the definitional issues that often surround the problem. However, despite these complexities researchers and advocacy groups have made attempts. To extend a comprehensive definition of CST, one must begin with defining commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC). CSEC is an umbrella term for acts that use children for sexual commerce. The First World Congress on Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children defined CSEC as:

The use of children for sexual gratification by adults for remuneration in cash or kind to the child or third person(s). It constitutes a form of coercion and violence against children and amounts to forced labor and a contemporary form of slavery (ECPAT International, 2008, slide 9).

Victims of CSEC are used as objects for profit. The abuser is often a stranger, the acts are (typically) unconcealed, and the victim's community or family often absolves the actions of the abuser (ECPAT International, 2008). Types of CSEC include child prostitution, child pornography, child trafficking, and CST. These activities are commonly associated with human trafficking because the demand of sex by tourists fuels the trafficking of children between tourist destinations.

Within CSEC is the activity of CST. The First World Congress on Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children defined CST as:

The sexual exploitation of children by a person or persons who travel from their home district, home geographical region, or home country and have sexual contact with children. Child sex tourists can be domestic travelers or they can be international tourists. CST often involves the use of accommodation, transportation, and other tourism-related services which facilitate contact with children and which enable him or her to be anonymous to the surrounding population and environment (ECPAT International, 2008, slide 14).

It is an illegal criminal act and an act of slavery where both the country of origin and the destination country share responsibility for flourishing markets (Cutts, 2008). CST occurs worldwide but Asia is a

major continent of origin, transit, and destination (Tepelus, 2008; O'Grady, 1992). It is designed with the intent to profit from a tourist's sexual encounter with a child.

To facilitate CST, travel agencies exist with the sole purpose of administering tour packages for CST. For example, the now defunct tour agency, *Big Apple Oriental Tours* served as a travel liaison by making negotiations and introductions for the tourist to the destination country (Trinidad, 2005). It is estimated that approximately 25 agencies like Big Apple exist in the United States. Furthermore, magazines targeted to pedophiles and pornographers market CST. The following is an excerpt from the Japanese pornographic magazine, *Lolicon Land*, marketing CST in the Philippines:

Manila and Cebu are the treasure lands of girl prostitutes. If you want to buy young girls but cannot afford to go to Thailand, Manila is the best place to go...Night entertainment in the Philippines is one of the most pleasant ones in Southeast Asia...Filipinas are full of hospitality ranging from services in bed to serving food (Trinidad, 2005, p. 66).

Opportunities for CST are not limited to guidance from travel agencies and magazines. Many tourists travel without the services of an agency and even develop long-term stays in the community. Most disturbing is the practice of pedophiles creating foundations and philanthropic organizations for street children with the intent to gain access for sex and pornography (Alforte, 2004; O'Grady, 1992; Trinidad, 2005). Philanthropic exploitation is described as,

Foreigners 'adopting' children by giving them money to buy things they need such as clothes and school supplies and providing tuition for their education. Because poor parents do not have the resources to send their children to school, let alone buy these supplies for their children, they accept such offers of 'magnanimity'. Other times, these foreigners lend or give the families large sums of money to start a small business or to have their houses repaired (Trinidad, 2005, p. 68).

It is appalling that Filipino families oftentimes feel indebted to these tourists and behold them as charitable despite their immoral intentions. The breadth of philanthropic exploitation is demonstrated through Belgian Felix Vanden Haus and Australian Lee Jesse Montana's 1995 child pornography case in the Philippines. The criminals disguised themselves as supporters and adopters of children. Instead, both

were arrested and charged with pedophilia after photos were found of them abusing young boys they promised to help (Trinidad, 2005). Additionally, O'Grady (1992) cites a pervasive case of philanthropic exploitation that occurred in Thailand. Between 1987 and 1988 Mark Morgan of Utah created and managed a shelter in Bangkok for the city's poorest children. At this shelter, young boys were fed, clothed, and educated. Morgan's work was recognized internationally enticing donors to send funds. Morgan's shelter was a fully operating and thriving charity. However, it was later discovered by Utah philanthropist Howard Ruff that Morgan had an extensive criminal history-- prompting an investigation into the inner workings of the shelter. It was found that Morgan's shelter was used as a way to support his pedophilic activities.

### **The Tourists**

Obtaining accurate data about CST is difficult because it is a hidden activity and often involves organized crime; it is a taboo topic and its existence is generally denied by leaders to protect the reputation of their country; there is a widespread lack of understanding about the topic; and many cases of CST are incorrectly classified (ECPAT International, 2008). Despite these challenges researchers and advocacy groups have advanced some characteristics of the typical child sex tourist.

Researchers have found it advantageous to differentiate between situational and preferential child sex tourists. According to Telplus (2008) not all sex tourists are pedophiles. For example, the *situational child sex tourist* is a tourist who 'happens' to engage in sex with a child (Protection Project, 2007). The majority of these tourists are generally prostitute users who are indifferent to the prostitute's age (Glover, 2006 as cited in Telplus, 2008; O'Donnell Davidson, 2004). What the situational tourist finds enticing is the look of the prostitute and not their age (O'Donnell Davidson, 2004). Although this individual abuses children they do not have an *exclusive* sexual inclination for children (ECPAT International, 2008). The *preferential child sex tourist* is traditionally a repeat offender, consumes child pornography, and stays in the destination country for extended periods of time. Overwhelmingly, they have an active sexual preference for children either in general or exclusively. Known as pedophiles, these tourists suffer from a



clinical / pathological disorder where they solely desire sexual contact with children (ECPAT International, 2008). The life of a pedophile is intensely secret; therefore they find ‘comfort’ networking in clusters with others pedophiles. According to O’Grady (1992), pedophiles who are child sex tourists are often members of clubs and organizations that specialize in CST. These organizations are covert, highly organized, and are traditionally found in Western countries.

One of the most well-known pedophile organizations is NAMBLA (North American Man/Boy Love Association). Created in 1978, its official chapters are located in New York City and San Francisco. The organization advocates for the right and legalization of men and boys to love ‘freely’ (O’Grady, 1992). NAMBLA’s goal is to:

Bring about a change in the attitudes and laws governing sexual activity between men and boys. It advocates the abolition of laws governing the age of consent for such activity and the abolition of laws that limit freedom of expression, including child pornography laws. It seeks to build a support network for men and boys, while educating the public on what it sees as the benevolent nature of its activities (Melzer v. Board of Education, 2003, para. 4).

To demonstrate the organization’s acceptance of and promotion of CST, the following is an excerpt from a NAMBLA bulletin on the issue of tourism:

Weigh the pros and cons of becoming involved yourself in sex tourism overseas. Seek and find love from American boys on a platonic, purely emotional level. For sexual satisfaction, travel once or twice yearly overseas. You might get arrested overseas for patronizing a boy prostitute. But the legal consequences of being caught patronizing a boy prostitute in a friendly place overseas will be less severe (NAMBLA Bulletin, 1993).

O’Grady (1992) identified at least seven other organizations similar to NAMBLA. These organizations provide information on how to evade the law; fund counter-intelligence units that keep members aware of law enforcement tactics; extend supportive networks both in and out of prison; and create survival kits consisting of false passports, ID papers, and financial advice for when pedophiles must flee their home or destination country (O’Grady, 1992).

O'Grady (1992) argues that the general public's perception of a pedophile as a repugnant or psychotic criminal is not entirely accurate. He describes the average pedophile as a middle-aged professional who is most likely married and involved in community and or religious groups. This individual plays a respectful role in society in order to disguise their true activities. It is not uncommon for pedophiles and child sex tourists to be educators and intellectuals – those who are considered to be upstanding members of society. For example, Peter Melzer was an official of NAMBLA who championed child pornography and child prostitution. He also was employed as a high school teacher. A Bronx High School of Science physics teacher,

Melzer had served for the last 15 years as a high-level official in the organization (i.e., NAMBLA) and had been an editor and had written at least 15 articles for the association's publication, *The Bulletin*. The articles written or approved by Mr. Melzer, the report claimed, contained advice on how to seduce and sexually abuse children and also endorsed child pornography and child prostitution (Raab, 1993, para. 13).

These accusations were denied by Mezler and no evidence existed that he engaged in any illegal or inappropriate conduct (Melzer v. Board of Education, 2003). However, after three years of hearings the board agreed to terminate Melzer. The First Amendment protected his right to associate with and advocate for NAMBLA. Be that as it may, his involvement caused disruption to the school's mission and operations; therefore the board saw fit in terminating him (Melzer v. Board of Education, 2003).

### **The Victims**

To be poor in the Philippines means a greater chance of becoming a victim of CST. Poverty in the Philippines defines the social condition of many children making it nearly impossible to climb out of a life hampered by extreme need. As of 2007 40 percent of Filipinos lived below the poverty line. By and large victims are enticed by the sex trade because of the disillusioned hope it promises. The children and their families have few educational and labor opportunities and as a result are easily recruited into a business that offers alleged financial freedom.

Hilda, a former child prostitute, expresses the lack of choices and the hopelessness created as a result of the sex trade:

It might be a better alternative to work as a hostess or a prostitute, than to do nothing at all, in order to survive. For after all, is this not the way most people live – by using one another for one's own advantage? If customers think they are using us, we can also say we are using them. We are living in a society where life is a series of manipulations. What is sad to think about is that we – the poor, the hostesses – are the most manipulated and despised (O'Grady, 1992, p. 40).

### **Victims of Boracay**

ECPAT (2008) conducted a study of 14 CST cases from the Filipino island of Boracay. To date, this is the most comprehensive study of CST in the Philippines and will serve as the primary resource for this section. Boracay, an island located 200 miles south of Manila is a world-famous international tourist location. Tourism dominates the island's industry with over 300 resorts and hotels, and 129 bars and restaurants. According to ECPAT Philippines (2008), in 2007 the average number of tourists visiting the island in one month was 46,340. Moreover, tourists outnumber the locals with the island inhabiting only 14,000 residents.

ECPAT (2008) found that 95 percent of households and commercial businesses rely significantly on the economic and social activity surrounding the beach. However, the island's dependence on tourism has had detrimental environmental and sociological impacts on its culture. According to a teacher at a local high school, "Boracay is no longer a paradise because the environment is destroyed by all the new buildings, resorts and hotels. Only the foreigners could put up such businesses in Boracay, not the locals because the people in Boracay are poor" (ECPAT Philippines, 2008, p.8). Most tourism businesses are owned by foreigners; resigning male locals to work as vendors, laborers, drivers, boatmen, caddies, and bartenders. Women and girls are marginalized and allowed to work only as waitresses, hotel clerks, sales attendants, and massage parlor attendants – all of which are low paying and untenable jobs. The result of this quasi-colonialism are rising populations, low levels of education and training, increased demand for

basic services (e.g., water, housing, food, infrastructure, etc.), environmental decline, illegal drugs, and an increase in minor crimes and sexual activity amongst young people.

ECPAT (2008) further identified conditions that make children vulnerable to CST. The absence of financial opportunity and growth is a significant factor. Prior to engaging in the sex trade victims' previous work experiences as waitresses, house servants, vendors, canteen workers, and water station workers was not financially sustainable for their families. Several victims came from single-parent homes where the mother is the primary caregiver and generally not employed. Furthermore, many of the girls, between the ages of 13 and 17 are either the oldest or second oldest in their family; carrying the burden to financially care for their families.

A dysfunctional family life often defines the experience of CST victims. ECPAT (2008) in addition to other studies identified sexual abuse and neglect as common conditions that make children more vulnerable to CST (Jeffreys, 1999; Project, 2007). Making matters more complicated, some children are forced into the business by the decision of their families or follow their families into the industry (Protection Project, 2007). For example, a mother featured in the ECPAT (2008) Boracay study stated, "It is alright for me and my gay son to be involved in selling sex but not my girls" (ECPAT Philippines 2008, p. 21). Conversely, several of the victims' families did not know their children were involved in the industry. Instead, they were under the impression that they worked in more respectable occupations within the tourism industry.

The living and working conditions of the victims demonstrate the stark difference between the comfort of tourists and distress of victims. In Boracay, young girls and boys were found living in brothels behind world-class hotels and resorts. They slept on floors crammed with two to three other girls or boys. For rent, each child is expected to pay an average of 750 pesos per month which equals about sixteen U.S. dollars. The brothels also served as the central location where pimps secure sexual services. Victims are exposed to working conditions where they lack adequate rest, sleep, and leisure. They often served at least two to three clients per night for seven nights a week. Additionally, they experience physical and substance abuse and exposure to sexually transmitted diseases.

Unlike most CST victims, numerous girls and boys in Boracay were freelancers -- meaning they had the 'autonomy' to work apart from a pimp. Victims were able to send money back home to assist with their family's poor financial situation. Their earnings also supplied money for rent, food, and personal items to keep up their physical appearances. While these victims were able to send money back home, this is not a common practice for all CST victims. Many victims are taken from their families against their will and are forced to pay a debt to the traffickers -- never again in contact with their families. These differences demonstrate the difficulty in describing a typical child sex tourist scenario. The examples provided should by no means suggest that all victims of CST experience the same circumstance.

### **Scale of the Problem**

...the sex tourism industry matters. It is big, it is wealthy, and it is damaging. It thrives on the poverty of the Philippines, and on the racism and sexism that exist.... It exposes women and girls to violence and humiliation, and leaves them in it, day after day, year after year, until it has no further use for them (Distor & Hunt (eds) 1996 as cited in Jeffreys, 1999, p. 190).

A source, transit, and destination country for children trafficked for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation, the Philippines is a classic and long-affected tourism destination (ECPAT International, 2008). Demonstrating the seriousness and extent of the problem, the United States State Department listed the Philippines on the Tier 2 watch list in its 2009 annual report on human trafficking. The US Department of State defines Tier 2 countries as

...governments who do not fully comply with the TVPA's minimum standards, but are making significant efforts to bring themselves into compliance with those standards; the absolute number of victims of severe forms of trafficking is very significant or is significantly increasing; or there is a failure to provide evidence of increasing efforts to combat severe forms of trafficking in persons from the previous year; or the determination that a country is making significant efforts

to bring themselves into compliance with minimum standards was based on commitments by the country to take additional future steps over the next year (US Department of State, 2009, p.12).

For its economic development and survival, the Philippines rely significantly on its tourism industry. Its Tier 2 status might be due to the country's reliance this industry; therefore hindering the government's desire or ability to comply with TVPA's minimum standards. The consequence of this dependency is the 'unintended' reliance on human sex trafficking and CST thus making the country a participant in the estimated nine billion dollar global slave industry (Glover, 2006 as cited in Tepelus, 2008) that boasts an estimated 150 million girls and 73 million boys worldwide who are victims of sexual exploitation (ECPAT International, 2008).

The country's tourism industry is growing – fueling the need for more prostitutes. In 2005 male foreign tourists comprised of approximately 61percent of all visitors (Dept of Tourism Philippines as cited in ECPAT Philippines, 2008). International visitor arrivals steadily increased at an average of 14 percent between 2004 and 2006 (Child Wise, 2007). The projected increase for the arrival of foreign visitors is expected to reach 18 percent by the year 2010 (Department of Tourism Philippines as cited in ECPAT Philippines, 2008). The top ten countries of origin of visitors in 2004 included (listed greatest to least) the United States, Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong, overseas Filipinos, Taiwan, Australia, Canada, United Kingdom, and Germany (Pacific Asia Travel Association as cited in, Protection Project, 2007). Reports vary on the number of child sex tourists and their country of origin. Nevertheless, the Protection Report referred to official police statements citing that the majority of child sex tourists came from Europe, Australia, and Japan (2007). ECPAT Philippines (2008) and the Protection Project (2007) cited South Korea as the country with the most frequent child sex tourists. Other countries of origin include the United States, United Kingdom, and Germany (Protection Project, 2007).

The prostitution industry (both adult and child) in the Philippines is believed to account as the fourth largest source of gross national product in the nation (Protection Project, 2007). <sup>1</sup>It is estimated that 60,000 to 100,000 children are prostitutes (ECPAT International, 2008) and the country was rated 4

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<sup>1</sup> This estimate includes cases of both human trafficking and child sex tourism.

out of 9 nations with the highest number of child prostitutes (Protection Project, 2007). The primary Filipino locations for child-sex prostitution are Las Pinas, Ermita, Manila, Ilocos Norte, San Pablo City, Cebu City, Tagbilaran, Puerto Galera, Angeles City, Sabang, and Boracay (Child Wise, 2007; Protection Project, 2007).

In 2004 two of the four most common routes to traffic children included the destination city Cebu which is widely known to have the highest rates of CST in the country (Protection Project, 2007). Filipino law enforcement cites Cebu City as a pedophile hot spot. Manila on the other hand, is not as attractive for tourists due to its congestion and smog. However, businessmen find the city to be convenient to purchase child sex when conducting business (Protection Project, 2007). Angeles City is known as the most famous destination for child sex tourists. It is rumored that the entire city's economy is based on the sex trade (Protection Project, 2007). Similar to Angeles City, Sabang's economy significantly relies on the sex trade. Several child sex tourists prefer Sabang for its more secluded location where tourists can feel anonymous and more secure (Protection Project, 2007).

It is difficult to thoroughly conceptualize and quantify the scale of the problem. Researchers and advocacy groups know that CST is widespread, but the question is if the rise of CST is directly correlated to increases in traditional tourism. This question can only be answered if the Filipino government and law enforcement officials are willing to place the protection of their nation's children above the revenues from the tourism industry.

### **Determinants of Child Sex Tourism**

Understandings of the social and cultural factors that create and reinforce CST are necessary to understand the environment where the problem occurs. The causes are an elaborate connection of socio-economic, cultural, governmental, and educational influences. Based on agreement across the literature, the determinants were limited to foreign tourism, military occupation, poverty, and cultural norms.

### **Foreign Tourism**

A consequence of the ease of travel between nations is the growing demand and opportunity for child sex tourists. As was previously discussed the source of revenue from sex tourism has incited governments to ignore the industry and its subunit, CST. Or, in the case of Thailand, embrace the problem and frame it as an advantage. For instance, the Thai Deputy Prime Minister argued:

I ask all governors to consider the natural scenery in your provinces, together with some forms of entertainment that some of you might consider disgusting and shameful because they are forms of sexual entertainment that attract tourists...we must do this because we have to consider the jobs that will be created for people” (Thai Deputy Prime Minister, 1980 as cited in Montgomery, 2008, p. 906).

This statement gives footing to the notion that the increase in the promotion of the sex industry contributes to the expansion of traditional tourism, thus impacting the bottom-line for these nations (Protection Project, 2007). The literature does not suggest that the present Filipino government shares the views of the government of Thailand. Nonetheless, Trinidad (2005) and O’Grady (1992) do attribute the rise of CST to the role of Ferdinand Marcos, President of the Philippines from 1965-1986. They argue that his corrupt and authoritative leadership ushered in a fraudulent government with devastating financial consequences. As a result, Marcos sought out ways to improve his reputation and the financial vitality of the Philippines. One solution was the advancement of foreign tourism.

The Philippines is home to incredible and diverse landscapes that include beaches, mountains, and forest areas. It seemed fitting to market this country as a world-class tourist destination. However, according to O’Grady (1992):

There is no doubt that tourism and prostitution went hand-in-hand in the thinking of the Marcos administration. There was no attempt to limit the size of prostitution centres and when major international conferences were held in the country, it became standard practice to offer women hostesses to influential persons (p. 102).



Since Marcos' rule subsequent presidents have made tourism a top priority for the country's economic development. Although no empirical evidence was found suggesting a direct correlation between tourism and CST, it can be assumed that such a priority and unregulated tourism could have further caused the expansion of it.

### **United States Military Occupation**

Since the 1950s the United States military has occupied the Philippines. Unfortunately, their presence has sustained the demand for adult and child prostitutes across the country (Protection Project, 2007; O'Grady, 1992). During the Vietnam War the Philippines became a major destination for military personnel to find rest and relaxation. During that time cities such as Olongapo, the site of the United States naval base at Subic Bay, transformed from a small city to a thriving urban center equipped with hotels, night clubs, bars, sauna baths, and massage parlors (O'Grady, 1992). Although military presence in recent years has lessened, under the U.S. – Philippines Visiting Forces Agreement of 1998, the U.S. military continues to have access to Philippine ports and airports for the purposes of replenishing fuel, supplies, and repairs. On the surface, the presence of the U.S. military brought economic development to a developing nation. However, beneath the economic expansion criminal activity flourished.

The sexual conduct of U.S. military personnel came under public fire in 2006 prompting the U.S. Embassy to issue a statement reinforcing the military's policy on the solicitation of prostitutes. However, difficulty remains in charging military personnel for sex crimes due to their status of impunity and the challenge of invoking jurisdiction (Protection Project, 2007). Nevertheless, the U.S. military presence continues to be felt and the consequences of its occupation have expanded the sex industry throughout the country.

**Poverty**

The Filipino economy has continually been hampered by a swelling national debt, corruption, government waste, and rapid population growth (Trinidad, 2005). These factors in combination with low education rates contribute to the nation's dependence on the sex industry. The quality and availability of education is declining (Asian Development, 2008; US Department of State, 2009). According to the National Statistical Coordination Board, from 2005 through 2006 grade 6 pupils averaged an overall achievement score of less than 55 percent while 4<sup>th</sup> year high school students were worse off at about 44 percent -- both decreases from the previous year along with decreases in all subject areas (Asian Development, 2008). Furthermore, a labor surplus is apparent by the country's scarcity of living wage jobs. From 2005 to 2006 the labor force grew by 314,000 with only 293,000 new jobs. For young people the unemployment rate is high particularly for those between 15 and 24 years of age.

O'Connell Davidson (2004) offers a more complex look into the economic and social factors that have contributed to the problem in all developing countries – not only the Philippines. First is the issue of militarization which was previously discussed. Second are the problems of international debt, price fluctuations in global commodity markets, and economic development policy. The author suggests that due to loan programs, and structural adjustments of the IMF and World Bank, governments have no choice but to encourage the prostitution and sex industry markets in order to pay off substantial amounts of debt. Additionally, the structural adjustments have driven down wages and employment and driven up the number in the laboring population thus creating an informal economic sector (i.e., CST) that undermines traditional economies. Furthermore, the funds put towards paying down debt take away from social spending.

**Cultural & Social Norms**

Traditionally, Filipinos identify children as parental property (Trinidad, 2005; ECPAT Philippines, 2006). A common phrase expressed by traditional Filipino parents is, “even though your bones are ground to dust, you shall not be able to pay your debt of gratitude to us” (Trinidad, 2005, p. 72).

With this view parents deny children the right to simply be a child. Generally, parents hold the financial stability of their families in higher regard than the welfare of an individual child (Trinidad, 2005). The Filipino culture values the collective over the individual. Collective values are not necessarily detrimental to children, but what is destructive is the lack of understanding concerning the universal rights of children to be free from being treated as property.

Parents who fail to accept the universal rights of children often times sympathize with child sex tourists or dismiss that the problem exists. Trinidad (2005) discusses one child pornography and sex case involving an American who traveled to the Philippines to set up a temporary residence to 'adopt' an 11 year old girl. Through this 'adoption' the American paid for the parents' home renovation, provided them money, and purchased a pig for her brother to provide income for the family. In return, the young girl was used by the American for sexual purposes. She disclosed the abuse to the authorities and evidence was found disclosing that the suspect was sexually abusing other children. When the authorities unveiled the abuse to her mother, it was determined that the mother knew of the abuse but chose not to report it due to the monetary gifts she received from the abuser. This behavior by parents has been uncovered in other pedophile cases in the country.

Social tolerance or ignorance is prevalent because the families and the community value financial opportunity more than the physical, social, and emotional stability of the abused children. In the Boracay study community respondents either dismissed the notion of child prostitution in their community or avoided the topic altogether (ECPAT Philippines, 2008). The following quote is an example of a community member's response:

If there is prostitution, the girls involved do not come from Boracay. They come from other places. There are no reports. I see children with foreigners but perhaps they are just together, as simple as that. Everyone who comes to Boracay is a guest. If there is exploitation such as paid sex with minors then it is a private matter since there are no brothels in Boracay. Minors could not be involved since we have curfew and hotels and resorts check on girls once they accompany tourists inside the establishment. (ECPAT Philippines, 2008, p. 21).

The welcoming nature of Filipinos is another cultural norm that often supports CST. The country's reliance on the tourism industry coupled with its rise in poverty illustrates why Filipinos are known to be hospitable to foreigners and at times accepting of CST and the sex industry. Not only do they rely on tourists to support the businesses in their communities (Trinidad, 2005), they also welcome the opportunity to engage with those of privilege. According to O'Donnell Davidson (2004), "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" (p. 39). Engaging with foreigners is a source of pride and increases the locals' status within the community (Trinidad, 2005). Unfortunately, the status awarded to the tourist often times equips the tourist with the power to harm the locals they come into contact with.

### **DISCUSSION/CONCLUSION**

In the poorest parts of the Philippines children continue to suffer at the hands of foreign travelers who seek to deprive them of their future because of their own selfish and greedy desires. This paper set out to bring attention to the painful consequences of sustained poverty, inequality, globalization, and inept governments. Despite the increased public awareness of the concerns of the victims of CST the overall knowledge base is fragile. Research has not moved beyond anecdotal data. As a result there is minimal reliable data to make generalized conclusions. Furthermore, methodologies used to produce these estimates are in its infancy.

There is a need for qualitative and quantitative research that would address both the macro- and micro-level understandings of CST. Additionally, innovative research questions need to be expanded. Based on the literature reviewed for this paper the following topics are proposed for future research studies: (a) examine the notion of social tolerance towards CST and how rescue and rehabilitation is dealt with in light of this issue, (b) compare and contrast methodologies and theories applied to the phenomena. Identify who is conducting the research, data sources, and research gaps that need to be filled, (c) compare and contrast legislative and enforcement issues across nations; in addition to preventative

measures or campaigns advocating against CST, and (d) analyze the role that organized religion and social entrepreneurship has in combating CST.

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