

HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN LATIN AMERICA: CULTURE AND VICTIMIZATION

by

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

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Human trafficking has recently garnered much publicity, often being considered the second or third most profitable black market trade after drugs and weapons. In this paper the role of Mexican and Brazilian cultures, primarily as they pertain to gender, race/ethnicity, and poverty, in Latin American trafficking victimization is examined. It determines that there is a great lack of research into Latin America, both in human trafficking and in anthropological studies, but suggests that there is a connection between how culture treats gender, race/ethnicity and poverty, the interplay of those factors, and the likelihood that a person will be trafficked for sex or labor.

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Human trafficking is often considered the ‘new’ face of an ‘old’ crime - a simple re-expression of the same slavery that has been present throughout human history (Bales 2004:2, Kempadoo 2005:vii, Winterdyk et al 2012:7). In contrast to historic slavery, however, people are now worth much less than before, and are no longer the valuable commodity they once were (Bales 2004). While trafficking is typically considered an economic crime (due to the motivations of the offenders), there are still many questions surrounding the topic. How do we catch trafficking perpetrators? How do we answer the questions posed by what is practically an invisible crime? How do we collect data when victims are not readily apparent, and so many cases slip through our grasp? How prevalent even *is* the crime of human trafficking?

One of the most often cited numbers in relation to the prevalence of human trafficking is Bales’ (2004) assertion that 27 million people around the world live in some form of exploitative servitude (2004:4). The United States government estimates that between 600,000 and 800,000 women and children are trafficked internationally per year, which has been, like the Bales figure, an often-cited count. The International Labor Office in 2012 estimated this number at 20 million, on labor trafficking alone (ILO 2012). Overall, it is extremely difficult to quantify just how *much* trafficking occurs, due to operational issues inside law enforcement agencies, poor data collection, and a lack of visibility. Many organizations use different definitions of trafficking, such as the ILO, which only focuses on individuals trafficked for reasons other than sexual servitude, while many organizations focus more on only those trafficked for prostitution. Countries as well may have differing definitions of what constitutes trafficking under their own laws, which affects what information is gathered and what statistics are available. Similarly, trafficking is a highly invisible crime. Any attempt to quantify the number of trafficking victims based only on something like police statistics will surely underestimate the number of victims.

Much more research is needed to help us better investigate the nature of trafficking and

The focus so far has been largely on state, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and academic response to the problem of trafficking and exploitation. There has been less on the victims, and even less on the traffickers themselves. And, for the victims, the focus has been more on their experience while being exploited and less on the circumstances and agency of their recruitment (Lee 2011:61). While this paper approaches an examination of trafficking victims' agency and the circumstances around their recruitment, a lack of concrete data means it must be largely hypothetical. In order to understand a person's victimization, one must examine the overall sociocultural environment, especially where it relates to the victim. In that vein this paper, using a modified routine activities approach, examines how underlying cultural norms may influence the construction of risk factors that then in turn may influence whether a person is at risk for trafficking victimization.

Theory and Operationalization

Originally postulated by Cohen and Felson (1979), routine activities stated that three things were needed for a crime to be committed — a motivated offender, a suitable target, and the absence of a guardian (1979:590). A “routine activity” is defined as “any recurrent and prevalent activities which provide for basic population and individual needs, whatever their biological or cultural origins” — therefore, formal work, the provision of food and shelter, leisure and social activities, learning, child rearing and sexual outlet, are all considered “routine” (Cohen and Felson 1979:593). These activities occur either at home, at the workplace, or otherwise away from home. They claimed that a change in social patterns in the post-World War II era — namely, the increase in activities away from home made an increase in targets and decrease in guardians — allowed for an increase in crime.

Miethe and Meier (1994) add a deeper level to this theory, in the addition of *social context*. The “social context” is the general atmosphere in which a victim and an offender meet, enabling the crime to be committed. They divide this into several different categories: the physical location, the interpersonal relationship, and the behavioral setting. Obviously the *physical location* is the *where* of the crime. A victim’s presence in a “bad area” and other factors such as poor lighting, low surveillance or others increase their risk of victimization (Miethe and Meier 1979:166). The *interpersonal relationship* indicates whether or not the victim and the offender are familiar with one another or strangers. Not only does this typically influence offender motives, it also influences the location of the crime and the chance of completion all vary based on this relationship. The *behavioral setting* is related to the physical location inasmuch that it indicates why the victim is where they are, and, we would argue, similarly may dictate particular behaviors through role adoption. In Miethe and Meier’s own study, they

eventually found that the risk of stranger victimization was highest for those living near (or who frequent) busy public areas or in areas with high social and economic decay, and that “person who are younger, lower income, frequent movers, reside in multi-unit dwellings, and live alone” are at a higher risk of overall violent victimization (Miethe and Meier 1994:166).

The idea of *risk* is what we want to focus on. Studies done by Sampson and Wooldredge (1987) and Rountree et al. (1994) stress the importance of including community-level factors of risk in analysis, as such factors can influence a victim’s exposure to an offender, or the suitability of a target, alongside the micro-level factors of an individual victim’s lifestyle. Similarly, other studies (see Gartner et al. 1990, Gartner and McCarthy 1991, and Mustaine 1997) have tried to apply routine activities theory across populations (e.g. males and females in the same population) and found distinct differences in victimization patterns, with some success.

Routine activities theory is satisfactory for this project for those reasons, but it has been adapted to account for an underlying cause of victimization that has been largely overlooked - the cultural constructions (characteristics assigned to certain social categories through acculturation) that may be the reason a victim is in a position to be victimized. The effect of this can be seen in trafficking as cultural norms (constructed behavior patterns typical of a specific group as informed by culture) of gender, ethnicity, or success may mean a person travels into a dangerous area to take work, or accepts a dangerous job from a trafficker, or willingly enters into a trafficker’s employment only to be exploited later. Culture, therefore, informs a person’s actions — both routine and non-routine — through the construction of cultural norms and may place them into an exploitative situation where they are easily victimized.

The first widely-accepted definition of *culture* was produced by a founding father of anthropology, Sir Edwin Tylor. While most anthropologists have rejected many of his theories,

his definition of culture is considered the most basic and is how, in a general sense, we are considering culture in this paper. Tylor stated that “culture, or civilization, taken in its broad, ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society” (Tylor 1871:1). Margaret Mead defined it similarly to Tylor, though she defined it as “the complex whole of traditional behavior which has been developed by the human race and is successively learned by each generation” (Mead 1937:27), adding the idea that culture is not just inherently present in a person from birth but is rather taught over the course of the lifespan. Moore (1952) and many others are quick to point out, however, that this definition does have its inherent problems — Moore boiled Tylor’s definition down to, simply, “whatever man learns as a member of society” (1952:255). In the early days of the discipline, Tylor’s definition remained the norm, but as it has evolved and gained new theories and insights the uniformity began to disappear and the definition of culture branched out into as many definitions as are theories (White 1952:227). Because of this general broadening of the definition — into abstractions on human behavior (see Kroeber and Kluckhohn 1952) and into a system of symbolic examination based on things and events (see White 1952), along with a vast amount of others — we have kept Tylor’s definition as both the broadest and most applicable to a cross-disciplinary paper, with minor tweaks in the conceptualization.

While Tylor’s definition of culture is being kept, we are stating that culture is a complex system of symbols embedded in knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs, and other learned behaviors imparted by the larger social group. Culture is not a stagnant thing but is rather a process that changes to account for changes in the local environment — physical or social — by accumulating “partial solutions to frequently encountered problems” (Hutchins 1995:354). For

our purposes a symbol is an object, gesture, sound, image or word that represents another idea, image, belief, action, or object.

Understanding how we define culture is crucial to the rest of the paper, as it seeks to examine the ways culture creates circumstances of victimization; specifically, how culture creates a human trafficking victim.

Human Trafficking

The UN “Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children” (hereafter “Palermo Protocol”) defines trafficking as:

“Trafficking in persons” shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.

The consent of the victim of trafficking in persons to the intended exploitation set forth in paragraph (a) of this article shall be irrelevant where any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) have been used.

“Smuggling of migrants” shall mean the procurement, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit, of the illegal entry of a person into a State Party of which the person is not a national or a permanent resident.
[UN 2000]

In this definition ‘trafficking’ means only the actual *procurement* of slaves, rather than the institution of slavery — however, the two terms are linked, and in some cases trafficking shares some of the same attributes as slavery. There is no clear estimate as to how much *trafficking* actually occurs due to definitional issues and the invisible nature of human trafficking (see Laczko and Gramegna 2003). Until the early twenty-first century and the adoption of the Palermo Protocol, trafficking was merely viewed as another form of smuggling and illegal migration. And even the Protocol’s definition is problematic. O’Connell, Davidson and Donelan (2003) describe it as an umbrella term, intended to “cover a range of actions and outcomes,” when trafficking is best viewed as a process of recruitment, transportation, and control at the destination, and each step in itself is extremely complex (*in* Laczko and Gramegna 2003:181).

Briefly ignoring the conceptual problems and sheer broadness of the Palermo definition, two major categories of trafficking are said to exist: sex trafficking, or the trafficking of persons,

usually women and children, for sexual exploitation (Lee 2011:40); and labor trafficking, the trafficking of persons for labor exploitation (Burke 2013:6, Bales, Trodd and Williamson 2009:34).

For our purposes we will be treating trafficking along the lines of the Palermo definition, focusing on the “recruitment ... of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion ... abduction ... fraud, of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person,” with the intention of placing the person in an exploitative situation, whether for sexual or labor servitude.

We are examining two Latin American countries through the use of case studies. Initially, it was believed that the use of case studies would provide a more comprehensive picture of trafficking in two larger Latin American countries; this was eventually determined to be not as clear-cut as had been initially expected, as the countries were not as distinctive (due to differing colonial development) as they were originally thought to be. However, a method using case studies was kept, primarily due to issues of time.

Case Studies

For this study, two specific countries in Latin America were chosen, Mexico and Brazil. This choice was made based on a couple of different assumptions on the part of the researcher: one, that the colonization differences (Mexico being a Spanish colony, initially, while Brazil was a Portuguese colony) would have an impact on cultural development, and that as two of the largest and most stable countries in Latin America, they would more likely have information on both trafficking and culture available. Both these assumptions were not as correct as desired.

First, a review of the two countries' economic, historical, and cultural development was conducted, mostly using what comprehensive cultural histories and reviews had been previously done and with a focus on the items typically cited as "risk factors" for human trafficking victimization: poverty, gender, and race and ethnicity. Such analysis is necessary, as many cultural constructions, norms and practices are the result of a society's evolution through time. Unfortunately, neither country's culture has been comprehensively examined since the 1950s, which caused the first large hurdle in this research, especially considering the turmoil the 1980s caused. Without the benefit of a larger ethnography, such secondary data had to be found elsewhere.

Second, research was done into the trafficking situation of both countries, examining in as much detail as possible what types of trafficking were present and what other researchers and NGOs had stated about what people were targeted by traffickers. As with the previous step, there was not as much information as had been expected. There has not been as much research done in Latin America on human trafficking as there has in other parts of the world. This severely hampered further research.

Analysis begins with a brief but necessary overview of the history and culture of the two

countries before moving into a discussion of their trafficking and how the country's culture may impact trafficking within its borders.

Mexico

Much of the Mexico we know today draws its influence from Spanish colonialism in the sixteenth century until revolution in the nineteenth. Settled initially at the tail end of the 1400s, the rapid spread of disease and poor native resistance allowed for easy domination and entrenchment of Spanish sociocultural systems (King 2007:15). The system developed into one of high tension between state officials and the wealthy, secrecy, and absolute power, has continued into modern politics in many countries, including Mexico (Hillman 2001:40). A complicated, brutal system of *repartimiento*¹ was initially in place, later replaced in 1503 by *encomienda*² (then *repartimiento* again) which required the conversion to Christianity and appropriate treatment of the natives. The systems of *repartimiento* and *encomienda* were only effective in practice, and captured natives remained virtually enslaved (Hillman 2001:37). The Spanish Empire, going into the eighteenth century, face serious problems holding onto their empire. After the War of Spanish Succession, fear of English attacks pressed Spain to conduct military reforms in Spanish America. They were also faced with economic difficulties, as their reliance on Indian and *mestizo* labor forces began to collapse. At the same time, the guidance from Bourbon Spain began to decrease, and reforms to the government system in the Spanish America colonies began to trickle to a standstill, and the elites — who had been previously

¹ *Repartimiento* was a system of forced labor in the early Spanish colonies where the indigenous inhabitants were forced to perform low- or unpaid labor for a certain amount of time a year on Spanish-owned land or in Spanish-owned mines and workshops.

² The *encomienda* system was one in which a Spanish soldier or colonist was given a tract of land and the indigenous inhabitants already living on it. The indigenous inhabitants provided labor for the colonist, while the colonist was supposed to provide protection and Christian instruction to them. Another system of *repartimiento* replaced the *encomienda* system in 1543, though in practice all systems looked relatively the same.

reluctant to defy Spain — began to escape Spain's rule (Hillman 2001:48).

Mexico was a very different case from the rest of Latin America when seeking independence. Led by priests, it focused on the use of guerrilla warfare and counted on the movements of mestizos and native Indians (Hillman 2001:54). Even as Spain reclaimed some of the other wayward colonies the royal government was crumbling, and the efforts of Augustín de Iturbide allowed Mexico to declare independence in 1821 (Hillman 2001:56).

The instability that plagued the immediately post-revolution region as a whole affected the future development of Mexico itself. In 1908 a conflict between Porfirio Díaz and Francisco Madero over the country's presidency was the last straw in a long period of opposition, causing a decade long revolution that resulted in the Constitution of 1917 (Joseph & Henderson 2002:460). In the 1930s, Mexico adopted the practice of Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI), which was intended to replace imports with locally manufactured products through establishing protective tariffs, quotas, and import licensing, along with subsidies and tax breaks for public investment in economic development (Joseph & Henderson 2002:461). It prompted the economy to grow at a quick rate, though unequal income distribution due to the neglect of agricultural production lurked behind the economic promise. Dismantling the *ejidal* sector, which had allowed (mostly native) communities to own communal land, by incorporating it into the bureaucracy did not help the tensions, and encouraged a rural-to-urban migration pattern for many rural Mexicans (Joseph & Henderson 2002:461). At the same time the industries began to fail, and the country struggled with high unemployment, inadequate expenditures on social institutions such as education, healthcare, housing, and social security (Joseph & Henderson 2002:462).

In the 1970s, Mexico discovered it was sitting on top of untapped oil resources. The

government saw an opportunity for extensive growth, and with the help of foreign investment - and loans - worked to develop the country's infrastructure. With the oil price rise in the middle 1970s, Mexico believed that its oil supply would catapult the country into the first world, and emphasized such development through continued heavy borrowing. By the early 1980s Pemex, Mexico's state-owned petroleum corporation, had acquired a debt of fifteen billion by buying equipment to increase their oil production, and state and private banks borrowed large sums from abroad to allow for subsequent loans to local businesses (Green 2013:41-42; Joseph & Henderson 2002:462). This ended abruptly in 1982, when the government announced it could not continue to pay the interest due on its loans, marking the end of the Latin American development boom. This caused many foreign banks to worry about an international financial disaster, and the initial remedy to the situation was to loan more money to Mexico, just so the country could turn around and repay its interest payments. It kept the banks from writing off Mexico's loans as bad debts, which may have salvaged the world financial system (Green 2013:42). Mexico, unfortunately, had little to bargain with world institutions in regards to their debt. The International Monetary Fund and World Bank insisted on incorporating free trade in the Mexican economy, rather than state protection of industry, and the country sold state industries and lifted tariffs, price controls and subsidies. The pay-off to this was, of course, that many businesses closed and many people found themselves unemployed. This decade immediately affected Mexico's agreement to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which prompted an uprising in Chiapas, an impoverished southern state (Joseph & Henderson 2002:463).

The Lost Decade of the 1980s obviously had a profound effect on society, one that is still being felt in the early twenty-first. In preceding decades the percentage of people in poverty had

been *falling*, but the 1980 crises reversed that change. By 2002, regionally, more than 220 million people lived below the poverty, approximately 44% of the overall population. The main cause, according to a UN report, was the decline in real wages, the rise in unemployment, and the increasing number of people working in low productivity jobs. Meanwhile, the government cut back on social programs, such as education and health care. Similarly, many of the new low-wage or part-time jobs went to women while men lost their position as breadwinners, and the social cutbacks forced women to not only work for wages and take care of the home, but to run their communities as well. Often workers faced longer hours, lower wages and greater job insecurity, and cuts in subsidies and the removal of price controls meant more expensive basics, such as food and public transportation (Green 2012:45). In 1994, immediately upon Mexico's entrance into NAFTA, a peasant uprising started in the state of Chiapas, one of Mexico's most impoverished states, speaking out namely against the impoverishment of the countryside and the lack of government assistance to the poor (Joseph & Henderson 2002:463). That is not to say that the poor had ever been well cared for. Only half of those employed enjoyed job security, urban infrastructure was barely accessible, and they had little access to housing or schooling (Latapí & González de la Rocha 1995:59). In the late 1990s, government programs such as PROGRESA (1997) sought to lessen or eliminate some of the rampant poverty. PROGRESA attempted to bypass bureaucracy by giving funding directly to eligible households, and used a range of targeting methods to ensure the program reached the poorest households. "Eligibility" was reliant on the targeted households' desire to improve their "human capital" through education, nutrition, and health status of household members (Latapí & González de la Rocha 1995:63, Coady 2003:4). The World Bank report on PROGRESA indicates that it did have some health, educational and possibly the severity of poverty in some areas (Coady 2003:15).

According to the Zepeda et al (2007) study, Mexico has not had impressive financial growth since the 1990s, and maintains a high inequality level (having a .511 Gini coefficient in 2004) with some fluxuations, and suffering from high poverty though it appears to be dropping (with the poverty rate falling from 27% in 1996 to 16% in 2004) (2007:5). Unemployment was similarly high during the financial crisis in 1995, but has actually been very low in other years. However, the informal economy sits at around 50% of the total workforce, and rose to 60% in 2004 (Zepeda et al 2007:5).

Gender in Mexico

The cultural norms surrounding gender and gendered behavior in Mexico have been heavily influenced by the country's cultural development since conquest. Gender is typically considered one of the large risk factors for trafficking victimization, in conjunction with race and ethnicity and poverty. This merits an investigation of gender in Mexico.

Gender in Mexico, and much of the former Spanish colonies, is constructed around two complementary facets - *machismo* and *marianismo*. *Machismo* is defined as an extreme form of patriarchy, and the two ideals sprouts from Iberian culture and the influence of the Catholic Church through much of Mexican history. The two terms are oppositional in nature - men are expected to be fearless, authoritarian, aggressive and promiscuous, while women are believed naturally submissive, dependent, quiet, and devoted to the home (Stevens 1973).

Marianismo draws heavily from the gender ideal formed from Catholic sanctification of the Virgin Mary, and “emphasizes sacred duty to family, subordination to men, subservience, selflessness, self-renouncement and self-sacrifice, chastity before marriage, sexual passivity after marriage, and erotic reception” (Jezini et al 2008). Gil and Vasquez (1997) describe it as an “invisible yoke” binding young Latinas to a no-win lifestyle in a cultural environment that no

longer exists. In line with the guiding figure of Mary, the ideal Mexican woman is the mother, “the source of boundless love and ‘absolute self-sacrifice,’” justifying that women are “spiritually and morally superior to men” and need to therefore be self-negating martyrs for their children (Englander et al 2012:69). All women, even those who are not mothers, are to be submissive, passive and expected to deny themselves in favor of both the family and males (Englander et al 2012:69).

Machismo, the cultural paradigm that guides male behavior, has been described as a “field of productive relations” (Lancaster 1992), and refers to two separate, and very different, systems of behavior. Positively, machismo encourages courage, generosity, pride, dignity and stoicism, while being a provider, defender, and progenitor of the family (Englander et al 2012:68). Negatively, it encourages “exaggerated aggressiveness and intransigence in male-to-male interpersonal relationships, and arrogance and sexual aggression in male-to-female relationships” (Stevens 1979). Machismo must of course be understood to occur in a large gender structure that includes limitations by class and generation (Englander et al 2012:69).

Machismo dictates that men demonstrate their virility, most easily done through fathering many children (LeVine, Correa and Uribe 1986), though that has been changing in recent years with financial difficulties (ibid). That does, however, cause high pregnancy rates for Mexican women. In rural areas, high pregnancy coupled with a lack of modern conveniences and other services causes the construction of a stereotypical mother, unrelenting between her chores of cooking, cleaning, childcare, food production and mending, all of which are in line with the ideas posted by marianismo. While this is changing in some circumstances due to the rise of shantytowns, women working outside the home and higher education, there is no indication of it changing in rural Mexico (Green 2013:178, Pablos 1999:109). Rural illiteracy is still common in

rural communities, and some rural families may place male education over female (Green 2013:179) as females are expected to be mothers and wives. As with many other things in Latin America, however, this is affected by a massive expansion in primary education since the 1950s, even during the Lost Decade of the 1980s. And, of course, education levels among middle-class women are far different than among the poor (Green 2013:180; Pablos 1999:109).

The number of women in the workforce — specifically in the wage-earning workforce — has increased since the middle twentieth century. However, for the most part the occupations remain grouped in what is typically considered ‘women’s work’, and is rarer among rural communities, and in towns and cities many women are employed as domestic servants - especially young unskilled migrants who have less than three years of education. Otherwise women are employed in the informal sector as street-vendors, in ‘caring’ professions such as teaching and nursing, in secretarial positions, in industries such as textiles or clothing, or in the booming *maquiladora* assembly plants in the northern part of the country (Green 2013:181). Some women are both able to work and raise children without the presence of a male head of household (see LeVine, Correa and Uribe 1986), but it is not known how common that ability is among younger women.

Race and Ethnicity in Mexico

Mexico considers itself a country built on *mestizaje*, or the mixing of Spanish and indigenous blood. Today, its indigenous citizens are either tied into *haciendas* belonging to large landowners, or farming and small-cropping as they have throughout most of history. Indigenous communities tend to be tightly knit, and members are encouraged to neither sell land outside the village nor marry outside it. Indigenous life still tends to be harsh, like it is for many peasant farmers (Green 2013:160). Technically, the indigenous population is relatively small. In 1990 it

was merely 10%, and sits at approximately ten million people in 2013 (Pablos 1997:107, Green 2013:169). The recent Zapatista (EZLN) uprising, which began in 1994 in the impoverished state of Chiapas in southern Mexico, drew attention to the situation that faced indigenous populations in Mexico. Chiapas has a very high indigenous population, heavily affected by the removal of the *ejido* communal landowning system in the early 1990s. The system was created after the Revolution, with the vast haciendas being broken up and given to over a million families as communally owned land administered by those indigenous communities with traditional methods (Green 2013:120).

The EZLN demands are relatively simple. They describe the indigenous population of Chiapas as living in “hunger, misery and marginalization,” not possessing land to use to survive, suffering from “repression, eviction, imprisonment, torture, and murder” by the government, violations of their human rights, exploitations, a lack of basic government services and a failure by the government to uphold constitutional laws while strictly holding the indigenous population to them, coupled with demands for better availability of social services and infrastructure in indigenous areas (EZLN, in Joseph & Henderson 2002:639). The indigenous who become “urbanized” - that is, move to the cities - fare little better than their fellows in rural Mexico. Apart from being forced into slums and subpar living situations, they face ‘acculturation,’ or the loss of traditional culture. The exodus to the city brings contact with poor mestizos and indigenous persons from other communities, and encourages the development of Spanish rather than the use of indigenous languages, and few vestiges of traditional culture are left intact (Green 2013:162).

It is unclear what percentage of Amerindians are trafficked, versus what ‘mestizo’s are. However, in other areas (such as Thailand) more ethnic minorities are trafficked than majorities

(see Rafferty 2007). Studies done by Acharya indicate that indigenous Mexicans are often trafficked and exploited, being made vulnerable through the indigenous uprising and its ensuing displacement, speaking indigenous languages, and widespread poverty. However, this is an area that would need more research-based development in Mexico and Latin America as a whole.

Human Trafficking in Mexico

Mexico is considered an origin, transit, and destination country in the trade of human beings for sexual and labor exploitation, a “Tier 2” (countries who do not comply with the Trafficking Victims Protection Act minimum standards, but are attempting to bring themselves into compliance) on the 2012 TIP Report. Many of the individuals trafficked into Mexico are from the rest of Latin America, with some from Southeast Asian and Eastern European countries and India. Victims are taken through the country into the United States and Canada, and to the northern part of the country from the southern part for sexual tourism (theprotectionproject 2011).

There does not appear to be a lot of information on human trafficking in Mexico in general, but many sources agree on certain things: most recognized victims are women trafficked for sex, and that women, children, the disabled, undocumented immigrants, and indigenous persons are most at risk for trafficking (TOCTA 2012:53, Trafficking in Persons Report 2012:247). Some victims are lured abroad by offers of education, employment, or marriage while others work in construction, agriculture, begging and domestic service in Mexico and the U.S (Shirk & Webber 2004:2; TIP Report 2012:247). Drug cartels and organized crime groups have also made their mark, coercing children and migrants into prostitution and work in the drug trade as hitmen, lookouts, and mules. Central Americans are particularly subjected to labor in the southern part of the country and in the United States (TIP Report 2012:247; Shirk & Webber

2004:1). And, finally, child sex tourism is persistent around tourist areas and northern border cities like Acapulco, Puerto Vallarta, Cancun, Tijuana and Ciudad Juarez, and sex trafficking in general plagues Chiapas and the Guatemala-Mexico border, and Chiapas is considered the state most vulnerable for trafficking due to its high proportion of migrants (TIP Report 2012:247, TOCTA 2012:53).

The traffickers in Chiapas are largely Guatemalan women (50% Guatemalan, 62% female, see Le Goff and Weiss 2011), and may traffic women in Guatemala as well (TOCTA 2012:56). Migrant smugglers (*polleros*) are obviously well-suited to trafficking, and may turn to it if their source of migrants disappears or if they are forced to, and similarly bar and brothel owners are likely complicit, if not active in the trade (TOCTA 2012:57). Similarly, thanks to the Chiapas' region's local on the border, criminal groups have unsurprisingly become involved - namely, the *Zetas*, who may drive victims into drug trafficking or hold them for ransom apart from simply forcing them into the sex trade (TOCTA 2012:57).

Acharya's studies on trafficking in Mexico are particularly useful for examining the influence of risk factors on sex trafficking victims, especially those of women from the southern states of Mexico, such as Chiapas. Of the forty women in Acharya's study, just over half (21) said poverty was their biggest push into trafficking, with many of them listing displacement and unemployment as major secondary reasons. The women who did not list poverty as their biggest push instead listed displacement or unemployment. Displacement and poverty are major factors in the southern states of Mexico, due to the continuing crisis of the indigenous community. Because indigenous persons are usually subsistence farmers or smallcroppers, poorly educated or illiterate, and are often unilingual speakers of indigenous languages, they are easier to trick or lure. In fact, over half (21) of the women in Acharya's study said that they had been lured by

false promises of employment in the urban centers of Mexico. Others had been sold by family, the family often hoping their daughter would help provide for them, or by boyfriends, which were sometimes false relationships entirely (Acharya 2012).

Conclusions

Encultured gendered beliefs and poverty are most likely the two main reasons an individual is trafficked in Mexico.

So far, little specific research has occurred in Mexico (a problem that exists throughout Latin America). Where it has been, it has been mostly specific to trafficking for sexual exploitation, where women and children will be the most victimized (Langberg 2005:133, see also Acharya and Zhang). While the roles of poverty and gendered expectations on women are well-documented in the trafficking literature, the same thing could likely be applied to gendered male expectations. As previously discussed, the positive aspects of machismo encourage men to be a provider for the family. In cases of male trafficking, it could be assumed that this gendered expectation encourages them to seek out potentially exploitative conditions in order to provide for their families. This is seen in Brazil, as will be discussed later, and it is not a great stretch to apply a similar idea to Mexico.

Similar, marianismo ideals — especially that of the self-sacrificing mother and the ideal of placing the family over oneself (something Castillo et al (2010) referred to as *familismo*) — and gendered policies of education and employment, coupled with poverty lead to increased risk of victimization. As they are expected to provide when an absent or alcoholic husband will not and what they can produce or make may not be enough, and they may be forced into a potentially exploitative situation to make ends meet. Domestic workers, as mentioned previously, are typically unskilled migrants from the countryside, and fall among the most exploited and

invisible women. Not only are they unsure of life in the city and their rights, they are isolated to their employers' homes and vulnerable to abuse, especially in cases where the worker is indigenous (Green 2013:181, Acharya 2012).

The previously mentioned *maquiladoras* plants line the northern border of Mexico, often owned by foreign electronics or textile companies. With increasing frequency, women are turning away from domestic service jobs towards these factories. These companies rely on cheap local labor to assemble products for export, especially to the nearby United States.

Approximately sixty percent of employees are single women in their late teens and early twenties. In the words of one plant manager, young women are “willing to accept lower wages” and “girls are educated to obey at home, it is easier to get their confidence ... they are loyal to the company” (Green 2013:183). The conditions in many of these plants are rough and difficult, and edge towards exploitative. One worker describes one as “the worst place I’ve ever worked in ... run down and dirty. And no air conditioning, just a couple of old fans in the whole place. It was so hot. Everybody just sat there sweating so much it looked as if someone had come in and thrown a bucket of water over them. I saw one supervisor get mad at a woman for taking too long in the bathroom. ‘Five minutes,’ he was saying. ‘All you’ve got is five minutes’” (Green 2013:183).

Of course, when a person is of indigenous origin, the situation is even less favorable. Due to the EZLN uprising and the continuing crisis in southern Mexico, Amerindians continue to live in poverty (with 60% of the population of Chiapas living underneath the poverty line), without basic infrastructure, with low literacy, and often without a knowledge of Spanish. The high displacement of indigenous populations due to the uprising (with, in 2005, 60,000 persons internally displaced in Mexico, all but 20,000 of which were from Chiapas) and the terrible

conditions of the refugee camps in which they live make these displaced, largely indigenous persons prone both to exploitation in the camps and to migration north, where they are likely to be exploited anyway (Acharya 2009). This especially holds true for women, who are also more vulnerable to rights violations in general, and in fact Servicio Internacional para la Paz (SIPAZ) has reported an increase in the amount of women and girls trafficked since the beginning of the conflict in 1994 (Acharya 2009). Without developments from the government that would help pull indigenous persons out of poverty, and with displacement from the conflict, encultured gender norms, and the specific problems faced by indigenous persons outside their communities, it is should be no surprise that they are more vulnerable and therefore more easily exploited by traffickers.

Brazil

Brazil was initially settled along the coast by the Portuguese, mostly in order to maintain a land claim, but they soon began to produce sugarcane to replace their previous exotic spice trade (King 2007:11). Due to a lack of native labor, more slaves were imported to Brazil from Africa, creating a large population of *mestizos* (children of natives and Europeans) and *mulatos* (children of Africans and Europeans), both of which quickly became the racial majority (Hillman 2001:46). The increased population meant more fear of slave revolts, which prevented Brazil from joining its neighbors in seeking independence during the Napoleonic Wars, coupled with the flight of the Portuguese royal family and later ruling of Brazil as a 'coequal' kingdom, then independent kingdom in 1822 (Hillman 2001:56,57). This relatively bloodless revolution prevented the country from falling into the same sort of social disorder as its neighbors (King 2007:37). By the late nineteenth century Brazil was quickly moving towards capitalist

modernity, even if social modernity lagged behind (King 2007:40-41).

By the 1930s Brazil began to more closely reflect its neighbors, helped by the centralist coup of Getúlio Vargas and the adoption of import-substituting industrialization (ISI) practices, both of which made Brazil's economy the ninth largest while producing one of the highest income inequalities and ignoring social problems, such as agriculture and land ownership reforms, which did not affect life in the rural regions (King 2007:53). The military coup in the 1960s, similarly, helped the economy through invitations of foreign investment, labor peace and tax concessions, though mostly ignored the social issues (Levine & Crocitti 1999:227-29).

Following the coup in 1964, the military involved itself in agro-exports to a great degree through lending, tax concessions, state investment, and guaranteed minimum prices for export crops, and thereby transformed southern Brazil into one of the largest, most modern agricultural regions in the hemisphere, despite reliance on foreign banks to finance and buy their crops (Green 2013:118). In the 1970s, Brazil's military government took a similar economic path as the rest of the region, and in the 1980s the economy fell into the same shocks. The Constitution of 1988's formation of the New Republic came at the tail end of the economic crisis known as the Lost Decade in the 1980s, in which economic advancement reversed due to poor loan practices and oil speculation in the 1970s, and sought to limit inflation and address social policies (King 2007:54, Levine & Crocitti 1999:229, Fishlow 2011:2). Unemployment, income inequality and poverty, which had seemed poised to disappear, rose - and despite growth in the 1990s, continued into the twenty-first century (Zepeda et al. 2007:2).

As always, unemployment remains a priority in Brazil, as does the high rate of poverty. However, despite some attempts to change income and land inequality (i.e. moving poor families into unclaimed lands in an attempt to redistribute land, causing clashes with indigenous persons),

the rural poor have been largely unaffected, and the urban poor have been similarly ignored whether due to underfunding or bureaucracy. Many of the rural poor are sharecroppers or tenant farmers, or work on the sugar plantations or agricultural fazendas, many of which are owned by single large corporations, and peasant-owned land has been squeezed by corporations and big farms. As big farmers grew richer and bought more land, the government encouraged exports of their goods, kept taxes low on elite items, and gave loans, state investment to infrastructure, and training to farm administrators, while the impoverished were deprived of state help, credit, healthcare and education (Green 2013:115,117). Those who moved to the cities found themselves in *favelas*, shantytowns constructed with poor planning, few conveniences and terribly constructed shelter, with high crime rates especially against women and children (Green 2013: 133).

The Gini coefficient, an index of nationwide fiscal inequality, in 2004 sat at 0.581, indicating a high level of income disparity. Similarly, the poverty rate is at 34%, though Zepeda et al. indicate that it is steadily decreasing (from 41% in 1992). And, while the rate of unemployment has increased since the early 1990s, the informal sector has remained at approximately 50% of the workforce (Zepeda et al. 2007:4). But economic growth in Brazil has not always favored the poor. Between 1992 and 1996, high labor income was still below the mean, as it came from earnings per worker rather than higher economic participation (Zepeda et al. 2007:8). This indicated that the poor could still not find jobs, despite increases in earnings among those who already had them. The poor fared better between 1996 and 2004, even if unemployment stayed high and earnings fell slightly again (Zepeda et al. 2007:8).

Gender in Brazil

As with the rest of Latin America, Brazilian men and women are subjected to exact

notions of masculinity and femininity that they are expected to follow. Traditionally, women were assigned roles within the boundaries of social norms, and faced harsh penalties if they strayed outside those norms, facing scorn or even social ostracism (Levine and Crocitti 1999:299). In the duality men are to be strong, superior, powerful, violent and active, while women were constructed as weaker, beautiful, and desirable but still subjected to the domination of the male (Parker 2009:36). This can be paralleled with the ideas of *machismo* and *marianismo* in Mexico, where the man is socially expected to demonstrate his worth, while the woman is expected to demure and sacrifice for the family's wellbeing.

As seen elsewhere in Latin America, Brazilian women were cast as 'sainted mothers,' and only a few upper-class women were able to express independence outside that image. Of the lower classes, they remained largely silent and, recently, had four economic pathways to them: factories, teaching, domestic service and prostitution (Levine and Crocitti 1999:299). Similarly, women were able to function in the informal economy as artisans, producing hammocks, linens, fishing nets, hats, and other handmade objects (Levine and Crocitti 1999:300). Women from the *favelas* (shantytowns) work as laundresses and scavengers, often forced to leave young children in the care of older children or relatives and returning home to unskilled, idle or unemployed men and high levels of domestic violence (Levine and Crocitti 1999:300). And for women and families living in the *favelas* jobs are difficult to come by, as residents are subjected to stigma nearly as quickly as they move in. Similarly, drugs and alcoholism are rampant, which leads to high levels of crime and violence to go along with the impoverished surroundings (Levine and Crocitti 1999:319).

Race and Ethnicity in Brazil

Brazil has a relatively low population of indigenous tribes, most of whom are located in

the Amazon basin. For probably thousands of years they practiced fishing, hunting, gathering and slash-and-burn agriculture. Many live in communal houses known as *malocas*, which can hold several hundred people, though with increasing western contact there have been moves to family homes. Hundreds of different languages exist, some of which have a very low number of speakers. Their inaccessibility protected them for many years, and even now it is speculated that there are a few groups that still exist, untouched, in the Amazon. And, often, contact with outsiders proceeds much the same as it did hundreds of years ago, with indigenous tribes suffering from epidemics of disease and violent confrontations with outsiders (Green 2013:163-64).

Indigenous persons have also had similar interactions with businesses. During the rubber boom in the late 1800s many tribes were enslaved as latex collectors, followed by African palm, cattle, and oil. Similarly, colonization programs have affected and encroached on indigenous-held lands. These programs are either sanctioned or spontaneous, and involve landless peasants moving into the rainforest in search of land to farm. This has sometimes led to armed conflict with indigenous communities (Green 2013:165). The government has also attempted to ‘integrate’ tribes into the nation at large. In the twentieth century, a Brazilian official praised these programs by saying

We resettle them as quickly as possible in new villages and then remove the children and begin to educate them. We give them the benefit of our medicine and our education, and, once they are completely integrated citizens like you and me and the Minister here, we let them go out into the world. [Green 2013:165]

Of course, once ‘out in the world,’ these individuals end up on the marginalized fringes of society, making them vulnerable to exploitation.

Unable to resort to the rebellions of other indigenous groups in the region, several indigenous groups have formed organizations demanding help from the government and

defending themselves against agribusiness, mining companies and colonizers. Mario Juruna was the first indigenous representative elected to Brazil's parliament, and he stated that

Indian wealth lies in customs and communal traditions and land which is sacred. Indians can and want to choose their own road, and this road is not civilization made by whites ... Indian civilization is more human. We do not want paternalistic protection from whites. Indians today ... want political power.
[Green 2013:168]

Similarly, Brazil has a high population of individuals with African ancestry. The country has pursued racial integration and “racial democracy,” but discussing race and racism is something that is considered very uncomfortable (Green 2013:170). However, even back into the 1800s Brazil was thought of as a country with no color lines, where slavery was tolerated because it lacked racial prejudice (Guimarães 2007:120). Indeed, Brazil did not seem to suffer from the same severe prejudicial gap that many industrialized countries did, with individuals of African descent in the 1940s emphasizing abandonment, poor education and archaic customs as the origin of the “degeneracy of blacks,” and the cause of color prejudices (Guimarães 2007:121). The 1955 UNESCO report on race relations in Brazil agreed that the mixing of indigenous, African and white “bloods” created “a society in which racial tensions and conflicts are specially mild, despite the great racial variability” (Guimarães 2007:127). However, certain scholars disagreed, one writing “We Brazilians, a white man told us, ‘are prejudiced about not being prejudiced. And that simple fact is enough to show how rooted racial prejudice is in our midst.’ Many negative responses can be explained by this prejudice towards the absence of prejudice, by Brazil’s faithfulness to its ideal of racial democracy” (Bastide, in Guimarães 2007:127). In other words, the coexistence of races in a ‘racial democracy’ was simply a social practice rather than a norm, or rather an ideal rather than the fact.

Racial discord does exist in Brazil, although it is different than that found in some

Western countries. It should be no surprise that areas with the highest indigenous populations are the most abandoned and impoverished, or that shantytowns contain a higher proportion of individuals with darker skin; and that of those areas, a high number of residents have no access to formal work and live in exclusion and marginality, earn no regular income, and in conditions of extreme poverty (Larrain 2000:165,199), all of which are known push factors in the trafficking discourse.

Human Trafficking in Brazil

According to the TIP report, Brazil is a “Tier 2” country and a large source country for trafficked persons. Women and children (including trans* individuals) are exploited at home and abroad, and child sex tourism is a problem in the northeastern part of the country’s resorts. Thousands of men are forced into *trabalho escravo*, “slave labor,” on cattle ranches, logging, charcoal and mining camps, plantations, farms producing cash crops (corn, cotton, soy), and in the construction industry as well as ones that are active in deforestation. Domestic servitude is also an issue, mostly focused among teenage girls and children. Brazil is also a destination country for individuals from Bolivia, Paraguay, Peru and China for forced labor in sweatshops and factories, mostly operating for the garment industry (TIP 2012:95).

What modern Brazilians call *trabalho escravo* is a relatively new phenomenon, beginning in the 1960s and 1970s with the advent and expansion of modern farming techniques and encroachment of ranches onto the Amazon. The laborers, mostly men, were transported into the regions from areas with few employment opportunities. Main slave industries are ranching, deforestation, agriculture, logging and charcoal in the states of Pará, Mato Grosso, Tocantins and

Maranhão. An estimated 25,000 to 40,000 laborers work in conditions analogous to slavery³ today (Anti-Slavery International 2006:3).

“Contract slavery based on debt bondage” is the most common form of enslavement among Brazilian laborers (Bales 2004:121). Typically, a man working for a ranch, farm, camp or other place of employment (known as a *gato*) will enter a location with high unemployment, inequality, or other ‘push’ factors. They will offer to pay for a trip to the work location, decent pay, good food, tools, and trips home to see the worker’s family. For individuals who are unemployed, this sounds as if it is the perfect opportunity. Often they are given an advance payment that can be left with their family, if said family is not transported with the worker (for charcoal camps this tends to be the case). They give the *gato* their state identification card and their labor card, both essential for proof of citizenship and employment. Removal of the first removes the worker of state protection, while the other remains unsigned and therefore there is no legal protection of the worker (Bales 1999:128).

Slavery does not only happen towards the Amazon in charcoal camps (where Bales focused), but also still can be found on sugar cane plantations. However, these slaves are subjected to similar issues as those in the rural interior: threats of wage deductions, no sick leaves, unrecorded hours, over-priced medicines and food, and failure to pay, all of which led to workers being paid far below the minimum wage or not at all, and often starting the next month with a debt on their future earnings (McGrath 2013:35). Most of the slaves that have been

³ According to Anti-Slavery International, someone is in a “condition analogous to slavery” (the wording used in the Palermo Protocol) if any one of the following cases is true: they are forced to work through mental or physical threat; they are owned or controlled by an ‘employer’ through the threat of or actual physical or mental abuse; they are dehumanized, treated as a commodity or traded as property; they are physically constrained or otherwise has restrictions placed on their freedom of movement. Only one case needs to be present for the worker to be considered enslaved. (Antislavery.org)

liberated from sugar cane farms have been agricultural workers, seasonally employed for manual cane cutting. Most are native Brazilians, though not local, as violations of labor and employment law are “typically less severe among workers who are able to return home at the end of the day (or at least at the end of the week)”(McGrath 2013:35). The 23 existing or closed cases of enslavement on sugar cane plantations have occurred in the coastal Northeast, the North and Northeast interiors, and areas of expansion, with a few cases in São Paulo (McGrath 2013:25). Similarly to the slaves spoken above, they may be employed directly by mills or distilleries on land they own, or employed by growers supplying those mills with cut sugar cane. Slaves may also be attained through contracting using *gatos* - in exactly the same process as documented above. Slavery happened more often where the mills and distilleries did not employ the workers directly on their land, where *gatos* were in use, or where the mills were smaller and financially weaker (McGrath 2013:35).

Other agricultural businesses, including cattle ranching, have been affected as well. Production of cattle and crops intended to make Brazil the world’s leading producer of biofuels has taken over swathes of the most valuable land in the central and southern regions of the country, and has begun to shift towards the Amazonian states in the case of cattle ranching (Phillips and Sakamoto 2012:291). In 2008 the Amazon region was estimated to contain 74 million head of cattle, and in 2007 the number of animals slaughtered surpassed 10 million. And of ten million of the new animals added between 2003 and 2006, ninety-six percent grazed on land that was formerly rainforest (Phillips and Sakamoto 2012:291).

In the area of forced labor the workers are overwhelmingly male, and between the ages of 18 and 34. Women, where present, are kept to harvesting and cleaning areas in plantations and cooking (and in fact are legally barred from *baterias* (Bales 1999) though they are sometimes

found in forced sexual labor in some rural areas (Phillips and Sakamoto 2012:296). Slave labor is more concentrated among migrant workers, typically from the poorest north-eastern states to the mid-south and to other Amazonian states. There are three types of migrant workers: seasonal migration, after which workers return to their hometowns, non-migrant labor and *peões de trecho* or “road peons,” who remain consistently migrant in search of works. Phillips and Sakamoto (2012) found that this last pattern is the least significant among ‘enslaved’ workers (2012:296).

Sex trafficking of Brazilians is also a problem. In 2000, it was reported that as many as 75,000 Brazilian women had been trafficked (or otherwise traveled for the purposes of prostitution) to Europe, and that 250,000 to 500,000 Brazilian children are sex workers. Child prostitutes are especially proper in the resorts and coastal areas of Brazil’s northeast, catering to the sex tourism industry (OAS 2011), and trafficked women tend to end up in Spain, Portugal, Italy, Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands, other South American countries, and Japan (Anti-Slavery International 2011:9).

Many women trafficked seem to be of African descent, a history of domestic or rote violence that encourages them to leave their homes or neighborhoods, possess low-paid and low-status jobs and little to no job security. Poverty, racism, and inequality pushes them into the lenses of trafficker, who see them as markedly easy targets (Anti-Slavery International 2011:8). Women seem to be mostly trafficked from Goiânia, Recife, Fortaleza, Belém, Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, and the states of Espírito Santo and Mato Grosso do Sul, from entertainment venues, tourist locations, newspaper advertisements, employment agencies, and several other employment types.

Often, they are offered well-paid jobs abroad as domestic workers, nannies, models, dancers, or prostitutes. Upon arrival at their destination their documents are taken and they are

forced to work in order to pay off their travel costs, food, documentation, accommodation, and clothing. They are often guarded at night, or locked in their rooms, and often are threatened with violence to themselves or their families if they do not cooperate (Anti-Slavery International 2011:9).

Anti-Slavery International (2011) cites the following story from Brazilian women trafficked to Suriname:

Two sisters were invited by their cousin, Raimunda, to work in Suriname, where she lived. Raimunda lent them money to make the travel arrangements and have their passports issued in Belém, Brazil. Upon arrival, they were taken to “Diamond” nightclub where they were made to pay US\$100 a day for lodging. They soon discovered the nightclub was a brothel that held shows with more than 100 women from several countries. The women were beaten and raped in the club. “We were desperate and extremely hungry. Our cousin told us we would have to stay in the club until our debts were paid off, and we should not try to escape because they would hunt us and probably kill us.” The sisters finally managed to escape by asking a Dutch tourist to help them. He took them to the Brazilian Embassy in Suriname where they were able to find help. The two sisters stated that more than 40 women from Pará are working as prostitutes in Suriname, and living in conditions of poverty, tricked by the promise of easy jobs. [Anti-Slavery International 2011:10]

Children are, as previously mentioned, not at all immune to trafficking and enslavement. The ILO speculates that there are 500,000 child domestic workers in Brazil. While not every child worker is at best, mistreated or at worst, enslaved, most are. Most are poor girls of African descent, and many workers began working long before the minimum age of 16 (Anti-Slavery International 2011:14). Many have no formal education or primary education only, and 48% come from broken homes where their employment was necessary to support the family - and many of their mothers were also child workers (Anti-Slavery International 2011:14).

Child domestic workers are expected to cook, clean, wash clothes, act as nannies and shop in the market. They are expected to work at least twelve hours a day, while being available

a full twenty-four. Children under the age of 14 are treated worse than older children, and forced to do more heavy chores as they are less likely to complain. Only two percent of the children in the ILO study said they had a weekly day off, and 56% never had vacations. Many do not have contact with their parents (Anti-Slavery International 2011:14).

Similarly girls are sometimes trafficked from more populated regions of Brazil to the Amazon, in order to service men in mining communities. Due to the unsettled and “Wild-West” like nature of the Amazon, it is difficult to locate and emancipate these girls. As with many other individuals trafficked for the purposes of sexual servitude they tend to be lured with the promise of legal employment, but instead find themselves trapped in ‘nightclubs’ and often moved around between communities. Poverty, drug addiction or involvement in drug trafficking, or lack of alternatives have all been blamed for pushing the girls into prostitution and enslavement. Many (50 out of 53 in one study) came from broken homes where they suffered sexual or physical abuse (Dimenstein 1994:30). Many consider prostitution a path to freedom unavailable from their homes, despite the dangers. Many are uneducated about contraception and STIs (one informing the researcher that AIDS is a river-borne disease), and many are routinely subject to violence even if they do not live in exploitative conditions (Dimenstein 1994:31,35).

Conclusions

Much like in Mexico blame for trafficking can be placed, in Brazil, on gender exploitation. While not entirely recognized by the same names, similar cultural values to *marianismo* and *machismo* exist. Men desperate for a way to provide for their family due to widespread income inequality and poverty fall into the grasp of the *gato*, and enter into a system of exploitation. Where women are trafficked, the emphasis seems to be on women of African descent, and children. Again, gender is omnipresent, encouraging women to seek out risky

opportunities in order to provide for impoverished families. Similarly, culturally ingrained racism closes many doors for black and indigenous individuals. And, closer to the Amazon, indigenous tribes are at an increased risk of trafficking due to their marginalized status in the governmental and social structure.

The factors in Brazil that current research suggests play the most into a person's trafficking risk are, as with elsewhere, gender, race/ethnicity, and poverty. Gender norms place men in the difficult position as the family's provider where funds may be scarce, which may lead them to be more at risk of victimization by a trafficker, for the purposes of cheap and expendable labor. Women and children, as elsewhere, are at heightened risk for sex trafficking victimization or trafficking for domestic labor. Where necessary the gender ideal of the "sacrificing mother" could cause impoverished women and girls to seek exploitative opportunities. That can also be seen in Acharya's study in Mexico, where some women were sold by their impoverished families, and would likely hold true in similar studies in Brazil.

Poverty is still, most likely, the most salient factor in a person's risk of trafficking victimization. However many things keep a person in poverty, including racial and gender norms that are culturally entrenched. Cultural norms dictate that a woman should only work in a select few careers or only inside the home, therefore women struggle to find gainful employment. Indigenous persons' employment options are limited by discrimination and a language barrier, while restrictions lessen their ability to pursue their traditional ways of life, leaving them desperate, destitute and vulnerable. Poverty and desperation are likely the two largest reasons a person is victimized by a trafficker – and poverty and desperation can often be traced to other factors entrenched in the national culture.

Conclusions

Gender, race, and poverty affect victimization in both countries. In Mexico, the burden of provision falls on the man, and on the woman when the man is not available - and both possibly force impoverished persons to take risky behaviors that may open them to a trafficker. In Brazil, the same gendered culture prevails, and yet there is a racial aspect - more African women are trafficked for prostitution, and closer to the Amazon, more indigenous women are, likely due to easy access to nearby markets. The need to provide for a family, and the inability to do so could possibly encourage a person to enter into a trafficker's employ, where they would then find themselves in an exploitative situation, possibly indefinitely.

Cultural norms of gender and race prevail, deeply entrenched in the overall culture itself. Indigenous persons in both Brazil and Mexico are more likely to be impoverished and discriminated against, making them more restricted, desperate, and open to trafficking victimization. Similarly, gender norms would have a specific effect. Men in both Mexico and Brazil are expected to be providers for the family, and when combined with poverty (and, possibly, indigenous status), they may be more likely to accept the employment offer of a *gato* or other trafficker. Women are more likely to be restricted – even socially, not necessarily legally – from certain industries, and in that limitation find it more difficult to seek gainful employment. If a woman is the sole head-of-household or otherwise responsible for the lions' share of provisioning, she may be desperate enough to risk willingly accompanying a sex trafficker or falling into a false offer of employment from one.

Ugarte et al (2004) illustrated specific challenges for nonbinary genders in Mexico, though it is likely that homosexual, trans* and/or nonbinary individuals in Brazil may face the same risks. In the case of a transgender girl that had been trafficked to the gay/transgender

prostitution circuit in the United States, they report that the narrowly defined gender roles in Mexico cause a boy perceived as feminine to be “loathed, socially shunned, and often banned from family events,” even inside the gay community, where she was not “sufficiently masculine” (Ugarte 2004:153). Stigmatized for her gender and her homosexuality, this youth had been abused by her parent and ran away from youth emergency shelters, which made her vulnerable to traffickers. The culturally defined norms of gender and sexuality are very rigid and narrow, with very real social consequences for ignoring them. These stigmas place great restrictions on many people, all of which may allow a trafficker’s offer to be far more appealing.

The problem with distinctly proving this connection is that proper evidence from Mexico and Brazil, pertaining to recent comprehensive cultural studies, simply does not exist. The author has previously applied a similar perspective to sex trafficking in Thailand, and the connections were clearer. In it, she wrote that

Thai culture is a sexist one, where women are still considered beneath men and often objects of barter or trade. As Rafferty described and as was previously mentioned, the victim’s gender is the highest indicator of trafficking victimization, followed by age, and then followed by issues such as family economic status and size, living in a rural location, and being undereducated. Girls from tribes and large families are also at risk, as are ones recently orphaned as family members may opt to sell them themselves (Rafferty 2007:412). With the education of boys being valued above the education of girls and the cultural stereotypes against women that keep them in marginalized jobs and raise them to feel pressured if they do not care for aging parents or other family members, it is little surprise that so many are trafficked into the sex or labor industries, both in Thailand and globally. [Ewing 2010:14]

The difference here is that there is a plethora of information on both Thai culture and, thanks to the focus of many in the anti-trafficking community, trafficking in Southeast Asia.

In Thailand, there is a contrast between ethnically different hill-tribes, Westernized cities, and more traditional, rural farmer. While Thai women have been considered better off than other

Asian women, they are still under strict cultured gender norms that guide their behavior, especially in rural areas. Female children are raised to be loyal to the family and self-sacrificial, and are more likely to have a minimum education. Women are limited to low-status and poorly paid jobs, despite often being forced into the roles of sole provider and wage earner for the family. One prostituted woman stated that after her husband died while she was pregnant, she “had no way out, so I went and worked at commercial sex in Srisaket province” (Jongudornkan & West 2004, *in* Ewing 2011). Despite being shamed for becoming sex workers, many Thai women and girls in destitute situations feel compelled by encultured gender norms to provide for their families no matter the personal cost.

From this scant evidence we can draw some assumptions, using the information from Thailand as a guide: there are enough exploitable people in Mexico and Brazil surrounding historic and current treatment of women, indigenous persons, and the poor to give traffickers easy access to victims. Women in both Mexico and Brazil are susceptible due to cultural gender norms of the “sacrificing mother,” and men due to the idea of the male head-of-household as a breadwinner, which produces a desperate need for work that makes them susceptible to any job offer, no matter how sketchy that offer may seem. Indigenous persons with less opportunities will also be similarly desperate, and the effect of trafficking on the poor is an oft-discussed topic. It is often when these states combine that people are trafficked. Culture plays a large part in determining roles and the opportunities available to them, which would then insinuate that culture plays some role in creating those persons most open to trafficking victimization. Unfortunately, due to the lack of information on Latin American recent cultural changes and the not quite as wide body of research on the nature of trafficking in Mexico and Brazil, this could not be conclusively linked.

However, there is a saying in archaeology that negative evidence (or the lack of evidence) is as important as positive evidence (or the presence of evidence). Latin America or, more precisely, Latin American culture has not been broadly studied since before the 1980s, causing a distinct problem where the Lost Decade's effect on cultural structure and norms is being studied in a piecemeal fashion. Without more sweeping and concisely collected data of the decades since the 1980s, it is extremely difficult to perform the cultural research this paper needed.

On the human trafficking side, a smaller body of evidence was the primary difficulty. Firstly, as stated in Langberg (2010),

The Latin American and Caribbean regions are two of the most under-researched and under-funded regions in the world on trafficking in persons. The official data is extremely insufficient, and the available information on smuggling cases is scarce and does not provide much help to the researchers. Until very recently, governments have been reluctant to acknowledge the existence of trafficking, and in most cases the focus never moves beyond sexual exploitation [2010:136].

In general, the lack of trafficking research made this difficult. In some cases information had to be extrapolated based on wide-sweeping concepts of trafficking in Latin America as a whole, and other times other information needed to be dropped due to lack of evidence. Part of the difficulty stems from the problems of researching trafficking victims, rather than trafficking from a legislative point of view – and in fact, the inability to gain precise measurements of how much trafficking is actually occurring is posing a major problem for research.

Lastly, the selection of Mexico and Brazil was made on an arbitrary assumption that some *differentness* would be present, based on one being a former Portuguese colony and one as a former Spanish colony, and with one country having been formerly Aztec and Mayan, while another was comprised of hunter-gatherer tribes. However, with globalization the countries have

grown far more similar, and the differences may not be as astute as we initially believed. Due to the lack of information on trafficking in Latin America, as well, it may be beneficial to perform any more research of this sort by looking at Latin America as a whole, rather than picking out separate countries, or comparing Latin American countries to locations where more research has been done, such as Southeast Asia or Eastern Europe.

The collection of data, both on trafficking and culture, would be an important first step to extending this hypothesis. Identification of victims, better assistance from governments, and emphasis outside of sexual exploitation in the Latin American region would be the best place to start, though it is complicated by violence, apathy, coercion and stigma. In regards to data collection the ILO recommends using the nominative technique, an indirect survey-based estimation originally developed to estimate heroin prevalence; the residual method, which uses estimates of immigrant populations to make estimates; and the 2-card method (Kutnick et al. 2007). All of these methods, however, still have the problem of identifying victims of trafficking, methods used by traffickers, and how individuals are exploited, which are especially necessary to this type of examination. Similarly an updated look at cultures in Latin America since the economic crisis in the 1980s would not be amiss.

However, we feel that, once those are taken care of, this could move past a theoretical stage and into something resembling a proper study. And if that were to occur, the implication could be for an implementation of policies aimed at cutting off the traffickers' supply, rather than attempting to cut off demand or the trafficker themselves, by providing base cultural change for women and minorities and encouraging economic development for the most marginalized populations.

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