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# Bartenders Know Best: An In-Depth Analysis of the Impact of Tourism on Local Barbadian Culture

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Bartenders Know Best:  
An In-Depth Analysis of the Impact of Tourism on  
Local Barbadian Culture

By

Pearl Jurist-Schoen

Submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for  
Honors in the Department of Anthropology

UNION COLLEGE  
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# **ABSTRACT**

**Pearl Jurist-Schoen**

## **Bartenders Know Best: An In-Depth Analysis of the Impact of Tourism on Local Barbadian Culture**

The purpose of my thesis is, through my own field research, to analyze the impact of tourism on local Barbadian culture. Caribbean tourism draws strong criticisms from anthropologists due to the region's geographical location and environmental landscape, its history of colonialism, and the economic vulnerabilities that result from the wealth discrepancy between the local people and the tourists that vacation there. On the very small and densely populated island of Barbados, nearly every person is impacted by tourism.

The focus of my ethnography is the cultural exchanges between guests and hosts, most specifically bartenders. A bar harbors many important elements of the Caribbean tourism literature; neocolonialism, service versus servitude, and authenticity and genuineness. Bartenders arguably have the most intimate and in-depth interactions with tourists, and their encounters with tourists are extremely representative of many issues surrounding Caribbean tourism, providing a good way to explore the impacts of tourism on local culture in a very micro setting.

I use my knowledge of the culture and my first-hand interviews with bartenders to draw my own conclusions about the role of tourism in Barbados, how the locals feel about it, and whether it is as detrimental to social life as the literature suggests.

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## Introduction

As we approached McBride's, a popular bar among tourists, we heard the bass solo from a well-known Red Hot Chili Peppers song coming from the open door. From inside, the bar was loud, dark, smoky, and filled wall-to-wall with white tourists dancing to the band's music. The band consisted of 3 white males, probably 20-something in age. Their set list was all familiar American sing-alongs that everyone in the bar seemed to know and proceeded to belt out the songs' choruses. There were a few black men there, but they kept to themselves, usually perched at a table along the side of the dance floor. There were two bartenders working, and working hard. They were in heavy demand so there wasn't much chatting going on.

The dominant group of customers was a British netball team; about 15 20-year girls. They demanded the attention of everyone in the bar with their skimpy outfits and the way they were dancing on the stage with the band members. Three of the girls were sporting knitted black, red, yellow, and green beanie hats that they had clearly bought as souvenirs. To me this was funny because in my time in Barbados, I had yet to see a Bajan (the widely-used colloquial term for Barbadian) wear something like that, but to them, that was the perfect token for them to remember their trip to Barbados. They were loud and, in my opinion, pretty obnoxious. I left McBride's thinking about how much that bar was designed to attract young European and North American tourists with their music selections. Even the bar's name is familiar and caters to a First World Western tourist. I wasn't sure if the staff found their job irritating and the customers disrespectful, but it

was an unsettling thought thinking that they probably had to deal with impertinent tourists like that, and that on the surface, I could easily be confused for one of them.

Travel and tourism are global practices and most of the world's people have somehow been involved with tourism; either as tourists themselves or as hosts to tourists. Because the practice is so heavily centered upon leisure, the study of tourism has been slow to be taken seriously as a legitimate field of study. However, over the past 40 years, the anthropology of tourism has exploded and has gained legitimacy among scholars for uncovering the effects of tourism on local culture, particularly during a time of intense globalization. This subject is very important because most people would admit to enjoying travel, but don't consider the consequences and effects that they could have on the people and places they visit. Anthropologists aim to uncover these issues. There are specific issues that are highlighted in the scholarly literature of tourism such as the political economy, the commodification of culture, authenticity, and the implications of the interactions between hosts and guests.

As two cultures interact through tourism, the cultural exchanges that persist often draw much negative criticism from anthropologists. Caribbean tourism in particular draws criticism due to the region's geographical location and environmental landscape, its history of colonialism, and the economic vulnerabilities that result from the wealth discrepancy between the local people and the tourists that vacation there. My own field work in Barbados aims to address the issues brought forth by other anthropologists, and to assess the cultural exchanges that occur between hosts and guests. The specific setting that I chose to explore is the bar. A bar harbors many important elements of the Caribbean tourism literature; neocolonialism, service versus servitude, and authenticity

and genuineness. Bartenders arguably have the most intimate and in-depth interactions with tourists, and their encounters with tourists are extremely representative of many issues surrounding Caribbean tourism, providing a good way to explore the impacts of tourism on local culture in a very micro setting.

While on an anthropology field program in Tasmania with Professor George Gmelch, I developed a passion and a knack for travel, exploration, and field work. George encouraged me to apply for one of Union College's Summer Research Fellowships which ultimately granted me the funds to spend 6 weeks in Barbados assisting him with his research for his second edition of *Behind the Smile: The Working Lives of Caribbean Tourism* (2003). This book is a series of narratives and interviews with numerous individuals working in different sectors of Barbados' tourism industry. The purpose of the book's second edition is to uncover the ways in which tourism has changed in Barbados over the past decade, taking into account such things as globalization, information/communicative technology, and the 2008-9 global financial crisis and what these mean for the future of Barbados' biggest market. My personal job was to update facts/statistics, contact some of the informants to ask follow-up questions, and take detailed field notes about basically anything that related to tourism and culture change in Barbados. In preparation for this research on tourism, I took an anthropology course in tourism to become familiar with the major issues and topics in the scholarly discourse. Therefore, prior to my field work in Barbados, I possessed the knowledge and credibility to think critically about the topic and issues at hand.

As I settled into my Barbados home and become comfortable in my surroundings, I decided to conduct my own additional research to use for my senior thesis. By



conducting my own field work, I would have a much more meaningful and personal senior thesis, as well as gain valuable anthropological experience. Throughout the course of my research, I found that the host-guest interactions interested me most and I wanted to use one specific setting to closely examine these interactions. I used tourism in Barbados as the backdrop for my research and the interactions between tourists and bartenders as my focus. Bartenders are constantly in contact with tourists and they are viewed as “professional talkers,” so I was confident that they would have lots to say about their interactions with tourists and what those interactions imply about tourism in Barbados. Bartenders were accessible and easy to talk to, so they seemed a logical focus for my own research, allowing me to examine the major anthropological issues surrounding tourism in a particular micro setting.

As an undergraduate student, I’ve received a lot of criticism for choosing to write about *bartenders in Barbados*. When people hear these words together, they automatically assume that my Fellowship was an excuse to party while on vacation. However, this thesis is worth defending because it explores an arena that hasn’t been written about in the anthropology of tourism literature, despite the fact that bars are some of the most visited places for tourists. Furthermore, this thesis digs deeper into the scholarly issues than one might assume. Bartenders serve as a micro-representation of the major issues of the discourse which, in tandem with my own experiences in Barbados, spoke strongly to the influences of tourism on local culture.

The way I collected my data for this ethnography was through an experience of complete immersion. I spent six weeks living in the village of Checker Hall in St. Lucy, Barbados’ northernmost and most rural parish. Tourists seldom venture to St. Lucy,

locals consider it the most “country” part of the island, and it remains largely uncommercialized. I lived with the Greaves family, a well-known and dominant family in St. Lucy. They, and their large extended family, were extremely helpful informants, happy to answer any questions about Bajan culture and lifestyles and introduce us to all corners of Barbados.

For the entire duration of my stay in Barbados, I was accompanied by a fellow classmate, Chelsea Tussing, who was doing similar research for George and his wife, Professor Sharon Bohn Gmelch, updating their book *The Parish Behind God’s Back: The Changing of Rural Barbados* (2001). Chelsea was a very strong contributor to the overall experience. We were very invested in each other’s research and by helping with her research about culture change in St. Lucy, I was able to acquire much more knowledge about Bajan culture and how it related to my research for George and my thesis. Additionally, the first week of our stay was spent with George and Sharon. This was helpful because they helped acclimate us to the new culture and, having spent extensive amounts of time there themselves, could offer us insider information to help us better blend in and conduct quality research.

Living with a Bajan family, and in St. Lucy in particular, was extremely vital. We were introduced to real Bajan customs and we were treated like family members. We attended family events, such as a 6<sup>th</sup> grade graduation from a Seventh Day Adventist school, a church service, an extended-family Fathers Day get-together, and even more mundane activities like movie nights with the young kids and watching the World Cup matches together. Furthermore, to the rest of Barbados, St. Lucy is considered “country” and a little behind the times. This actually proved to be helpful for us because we were

then exposed to some of the hidden corners of Barbados; places and people that are seldom in contact with tourists and are more representative of authentic Bajan culture. Throughout the course of my research, it became evident that nearly every cultural experience that I had could be tied into my research. In anthropology, culture as a whole must be examined in order to uncover specific answers about any given topic. I certainly came to understand this holistic approach first-hand and this ethnography is a compilation of not only my interviews and encounters with bartenders, but also how these experiences fit into my entire cultural experience in Barbados.

My research was somewhat typical of any ethnographer; I did participant observation, I conducted formal and informal interviews, I did some book research to supplement certain findings, and I took vast amounts of field notes (on *everything*) that I typed up daily and submitted to George weekly for comments. He helped me dig deeper into certain issues that might become helpful in the future, as well as critique my field note-taking skills so I could improve as an anthropologist.

My interviews with bartenders were both spontaneous and planned. On some occasions, I would wander into a bar at a resort or a restaurant and engage in friendly conversation with a bartender, asking them casual conversations about their job. Other times, I would call a major resort ahead of time to schedule a sit-down, tape-recorded, formal interview with a bartender or bar manager and discuss the major issues of the discourse. And sometimes Chelsea and I would just do participant observation of the interactions between tourists and bartenders at some of the tourist hot-spots for nightlife. In contrast, we also visited local hot-spots where tourists didn't venture and engaged with bartenders there. Depending on the circumstance, I engaged with bartenders in numerous

ways. Interviewing is an art and my skills vastly improved over the course of my stay. I also learned that some informants are better than others, and most people might feel uncomfortable talking to me about heavy issues, such as neocolonialism, so I learned when to avoid such words and topics depending on the flow of the conversation. In general, I found that whether the interview was formal, informal, or if it was solely based on my own observations, people were more than happy to answer questions and assist me in my research. I would always explain the nature of my research, and people responded very positively, usually feeling some sense of pride for being an important part of my investigation. Logistically, I had a cellular phone and there was a landline and internet access in our homestay. These means of communication made it extremely easy to contact people to set up interviews or figure out the best places to conduct research.

Doing research for George was a good backdrop for my own research. I had the knowledge and insight to ask the right questions and search for specific answers. My field notes on Bajan culture have also proved to be just as important to my research, exemplifying the ways in which tourism and the Western First World have come in contact with Bajan culture. My experiences highlight some major ways in which tourism has had clear effects on local culture and other ways in which traditional Bajan life remains untouched. This holistic approach through immersion and participant observation helped me to uncover the impact that tourism is having in Barbados and how examining something on such a small scale, like the interactions between tourists and bartenders, can speak volumes for the role of tourism in Barbados.

The purpose of this thesis is to paint a picture of the ways in which tourism impacts local Bajan culture, with a focus on the implications of the interactions between

bartenders and tourists. The literature review serves the purpose of introducing all of the major issues covered in the scholarly anthropological discourse on tourism, such as the political economy, commodification of culture, authenticity, and relations between hosts and guests. It begins as an overview of these topics, then narrows to issues specific to Caribbean tourism. A brief history of Barbados is given to set the scene for this ethnography, followed by an academic justification for using a bar as the setting for my research. Chapter One provides a factual, statistical, and sociological overview of the role that the tourism industry plays in Barbados. Chapter Two is a compilation of my transcribed interviews with bartenders and field notes from within bars. This chapter serves the purpose of giving these workers a voice and using their explicit commentary to better understand the implications of their interactions with tourists. It should be noted that to protect the identity of my informants, all of the bartenders and the names of their bars/hotels have been replaced with pseudonyms. Chapter Three takes a more analytical approach in considering the impact of tourism on local culture. By incorporating my interviews and participant observation in bars and all of the cultural experiences and knowledge I had acquired, I analyze the effects that tourism has on local culture. Finally, the concluding chapter will tie my entire ethnography together, assessing the role that tourism plays in local culture, the degree to which the scholarly discourse on tourism rings true to my insider experiences, and how the interactions between bartenders and tourists might serve as a metaphor for broader issues.

# LITERATURE REVIEW

## Introduction/Focus

The anthropology of tourism is a growing field in which the impacts of tourism on local culture are observed and analyzed. I have found that, in general, the effects of mass tourism have proven to be detrimental and exploitative and are viewed in a negative light by most anthropologists. I have also found that the literature lacks the voice of the local people. Many generalizations are made about the locals' perceptions of mass tourism, but narratives and interviews of those who encounter tourists on a daily basis are generally absent or underrepresented.

When a Union College Summer Research Fellowship brought me to Barbados to do research for Professor George Gmelch, I was intrigued by the relationship between hosts and guests and the significance behind the different layers of interactions that occurred between them. I wanted to study the implications of their interactions in a particular setting; the bar. The interactions between bartenders and tourists are significant and telling in numerous ways. They incorporate the issues of neocolonialism, the tourist gaze, and authenticity, while including issues such as alcohol and drunkenness that directly affect how the tourist and bartender interact. And because of the lack of representation of the local voice in much scholarship on tourism, I wanted to incorporate as much of this as possible through interview excerpts. I also wanted to uncover whether the effects of tourism really were as negative as the literature suggests.

## The Anthropology of Tourism

Tourism emerged as a major subfield of anthropology during the 1970s, when the mass tourism industry really started to boom. Prior to that, like sport, it was seen as an illegitimate field in academia because the nature of tourism centers on leisure and play. However, the past 40 years have brought forth numerous studies and conclusions about the effects of tourism on local culture. Most of the literature suggests the long-term detriments of tourism for the local people and focuses less on the impacts that travel has on the tourists themselves.

In Sharon Gmelch's introduction to *Tourists and Tourism: A Reader* (S. Gmelch 2010), she outlines the major issues that are studied in the academic field of tourism. The anthropology of tourism mostly observes the cultural exchanges between First and Third World countries, in which the less-developed countries use tourism as their path to prosperity and growth in the global market. Tourism brings jobs and economic opportunity to tourist destinations. "Worldwide, tourism employs one in every 12 workers and accounts for 11 percent of global gross domestic product (GDP). In some countries, the figures are higher," (S. Gmelch, 2010: 4). Such aspects of tourism's political economy can create major dependencies on tourists for the host countries. They are often willing to drastically lower their asking prices in order to keep the influx of international money coming in (Pattullo, 2005). The motivations of tourists, however, are quite different than the hosts: they are looking for a liminal experience (Graburn, 2010), an opportunity to escape from the responsibilities and expectations at home. On tour, they can be special, free, and anonymous. When "eighty percent of international tourists are citizens of the 20 richest nations," (S. Gmelch, 2010: 4) there is an imbalanced

relationship between the host and the guest. The guest, likely a First World citizen, acts with a sense of imperialism over the, often Third World, host (Nash, 1977). This results in numerous issues relating to race and gender. The tourist is looking for an authentic experience, but holds very specific standards. Tourists want friendly service, comfort, and quality so they can relax and forget about their problems at home. (This is ironic because, as the literature suggests, their quest for liminality results in major detriments for their hosts.) They also expect the fantastical and exotic culture that is advertised to them. The conceptualized “Other” becomes the objective for the host country to exemplify in order to keep tourists coming (Lofgren, 2010). This lends to the issue of inauthenticity and the diminishment of real local culture. Respectfully, authenticity is subjective and there is no universal standard in which to assess the authenticity of something or someone.

I have found that the literature on the anthropology of tourism can be categorized to touch upon the major issues that surround tourism. They are 1) political economy, 2) the commodification of culture, 3) authenticity, and 4) relations between hosts and guests, which includes the tourist gaze, gender and race relations, and the implications of sex/romance between hosts and guests. However, these categories easily blend together because, as we know about anthropology, all aspects of culture are related.

### **Political Economy**

The political economy of tourism refers to the economic component of the field, on a macro and micro level. The discourse usually boils down to the power dynamics between hosts and guests. Most anthropologists would argue that tourism is an industry based on inequality. Tourists represent disposable income. They are thought to have



endless amounts of time and money in which they're free and able to spend them however they want. On the contrary, workers in the tourism industry depend on tourist dollars. They don't have the ability to take time off from work and they don't have the imagined bottomless pocket that the tourist does. Whether these stereotypes ring true for all tourists and workers in all tourist destinations, some level of inequality is certainly the basis for the political economy of tourism. (Pattullo, 2005; Nash, 1977)

Furthermore, the political economy surfaces the issue of the net gain for the tourist destination. Some countries see tourism as a major road to globalization and advancement as they come in contact with the First World. However, the political economy takes into account all of the major infrastructural expenditures that these hosts must endure to accommodate their tourists (i.e. roads, airports, drinking water, waste management, etc). And with the commodification of culture, which will be further discussed below, we must ask whether host countries truly gain from selling themselves as tourist destinations. (Pattullo, 2005)

The most extreme examples of economic inequalities and dependencies are those of the Caribbean. Caribbean countries have less to contribute in the global market and their main source of foreign exchange is through their tourism industry (Pattullo, 2005 & 2010; Davidson & Taylor, 1999). Therefore, political economy issues are best exemplified in the Caribbean which will be discussed in further detail below.

### **Commodification of Culture**

The concept of the commodification of culture refers to the phenomenon of culture being sold as a product. When tourists go on tour, they tend to visit places that are culturally appealing with something in particular that they want to see, do, and

experience. Host countries are then treated by the tourist as a commodity, which they in turn play into by playing up that special attraction to make more money.

Davydd Greenwood (1977) paints a picture of this with his case study in Fuenterrabia in the Spanish Basque country. The ritual is called the Alarde and it is the recreation of Spanish victory over the French in 1638 AD. This sacred community event involves all men, women, and children. Alarde is not supposed to be performed for outsiders. It's intimate and not typically understood by outsiders. One year, the ritual was advertised as a tourist attraction which resulted in flocks of tourists coming to experience the sacred ritual. It became so popular that towns started performing it twice per day and for money. Local governments were excited by the opportunity to prosper from this custom, but the Alarde eventually lost its appeal and importance to the local community. It was no longer authentic or performed for the right reasons. Greenwood concludes by saying that when culture is commodified, cultural meaning is undermined and lost. He also states that "for the monied tourist, the tourism industry promises that the world is his/hers to use" (Greenwood, 1977: 136). This plays into the widely shared notion among these scholars that tourism is inherently an exploitative practice. Culture is something worth preserving, and when it becomes commodified for its authentic appeal, it becomes a tool for business rather than an expression of local culture. In these cases, the hosts are vulnerable and are the losers (Pearce, 2005).

On the contrary, some scholars will argue that there is a sense of empowerment by the hosts when they commodify their cultural practices to appeal to tourists. By continuously practicing/showcasing a cultural tradition for tourists, hosts are displaying cultural pride while maintaining a tradition that may otherwise evaporate during other

global processes. We can all agree that culture is dynamic and is ever-changing. By commodifying a cultural practice, the meaning may change, but to some that can be argued as natural.

### **Authenticity**

Another major theme within the anthropology of tourism is that of authenticity. Tourists have the notion that they want an authentic experience while on tour. To accommodate their desires, tourist destinations play up their cultural uniqueness (*otherness*) to live up to the tourists' expectations. Dean MacCannell argues that the quest for authenticity is what drives tourism, and therefore leads to the further concept of *staged* authenticity. In a dramaturgical sense, there is the front stage that the audience is exposed to, and there is the backstage where solidarity and authenticity reside. Some tourists don't see the difference and accept the front stage as reality. Others will try to penetrate the backstage, turning the backstage into the front stage and pushing the backstage further away (MacCannell, 1976).

The perfect example of this is Edward Bruner's (2010) study of the production at the Mayers ranch in Kenya, showing off the Maasai warriors. Tourists view this as an authentic experience that lives up to their expectations of the exotic Other, and they are too blinded to see that this production is completely staged and is no longer realistic. It represents Maasai warriors acting as primitive, athletic, brave, violent, and animalistic. The production hid all traces of modernity, exemplifying the Maasai people and traditions as timeless. This was all performed on a stage that was constructed and designed as a photo opportunity for tourists. And the tourists get to experience the show

from a colonial backdrop; they are served high tea by African natives while they observe this primitive production (Bruner, 2010).

This example of staged authenticity highlights the artificiality of such tourist attractions. Hosts are so determined to provide a service in which tourists will want to invest in that they will completely fabricate an aspect of their culture to appeal to the tourist (Pruitt & LaFont, 2010), even if it is offensive and inauthentic. Similar to the notion of the commodification of culture, when “authenticity” is staged, its cultural significance severely changes. The Maasai traditions are now tainted through this degrading and inaccurate production that reinforces their primitive nature and servitude to their former colonial powers.

However, similar to the opposing viewpoint expressed above in the discussion of the commodification of culture, the notion of a culture being “staged” could be seen as only creating a new reality for a changing culture. And if it’s truly a new reality, then these staged practices would not be considered inauthentic. The tourists’ version of an authentic experience is one that lives up to their fantastical expectation. If the hosts meet the tourists’ expectations by exoticising their original traditions, these exoticized versions may become the new reality.

### **Host/Guest Relations**

Tourism forces two cultures to interact with one another. So when discussing the effects of tourism on local culture, the face-to-face interactions between hosts and guests cannot be overlooked. It is these interactions that really shape the typical tourism worker’s thoughts on tourism and the presence of outsiders in their country. It is not the political economy or the commodification of culture or the disappearing authenticity of

their culture that affects their opinion because those factors can be seen as “the way it is” and just something that comes along with the territory of living in a tourist destination. These dynamics can be seen as engrained within all tourist destinations. Through interviews and personal narratives, George Gmelch (2003, 2011) does the best job in uncovering the workers in Barbados’ tourism industry’s opinions of the industry and of their explicit feelings toward their interactions with tourists. Although his informants wouldn’t use such terms, Gmelch, like many other scholars, hints at major issues such as the tourist gaze, gender and race, and sex/romance between hosts and guests.

The tourist gaze is a highly referred-to and timeless term coined by John Urry (2002) that recognizes the lens in which tourists view the place and people they visit. They see the host country as somewhere that they can do what they want with no consequences, and they notice the contrasts between the place in which they tour and the place in which they live. The tourist gaze:

varies by society, by social group and by historical period. Such gazes are constructed through difference. By this I mean not merely that there is no universal experience that is true for all tourists at all times. Rather the gaze in any historical period is constructed in relationship to its opposite, to non-tourist forms of social experience and consciousness. What makes a particular tourist gaze depends upon what it is contrasted with; what the forms of non-tourist experience happen to be. The gaze therefore presupposed a system of social activities and signs which locate the particular tourist practices, not in terms of some intrinsic characteristics, but through the contrasts implied with non-tourist social practices, particularly those based within the home and paid work. (Urry 2002: 1-2)

Although somewhat of a vague concept, the tourist gaze encompasses the ways in which tourists see and interpret the place in which they tour. It is generally in an imperialist way, subconsciously degrading the locals who serve them (Nash, 1977). This concept has been influential throughout most analyses of host/guest relations.

Race is a major factor that plays into how hosts and guests interact. Racial tensions are particularly present in former colonies. In places such as the Caribbean islands, where blacks used to serve their European masters in the form of slavery, in the post-colonial world they serve their white European and North American visitors in the form of tourism (Pattullo, 2005; G. Gmelch, 2003). Much of the anthropological literature regarding tourism considers tourism as a form of neocolonialism. Although I, and George Gmelch's informants (G. Gmelch, 2003 & 2011), would argue that that is not a conscious assessment for most hosts and guests, the discourse of service versus servitude and racial hierarchies does indeed exist. The widely accepted notion of white tourists being wealthy, privileged, and powerful (and black hosts being backward, uncivilized, exotic, natural, and the fantasized Other) is one that is reinforced by both the tourist and the host, which lends itself to the vicious cycle of tourist imperialism on both the macro and micro level (Chambers, 2000; Nash, 1977; Pattullo, 2005). For on the micro level of tourist and host interactions, the stereotypes that go along with black and white (or any other race/ethnicity) are always present.

Tourism also surfaces the interesting dynamics of gender roles and perceptions. In this male-dominated world, women are inevitably seen as subordinate. Female workers in the tourism industry tend to work in the more menial-paying, less-desired jobs (Levy, 1999). Female tourists are generally seen as more vulnerable and easier to take advantage of. When hosts and guests start to interact sexually or romantically, an additional layer to the structure of the power dynamics is added. Pruitt and LaFont (2010) differentiate "romance tourism" from "sex tourism" by the presence of emotional attachment. Examples of these interactions will be discussed in further detail in the next section, but

in short, economic advancement is typically the hosts' initial driving factor behind sexual/romantic encounters, whereas the guest seeks an exotic experience with the fantasized Other. Which is more powerful; sexual dominance or monetary means? In these cases, gender, money, race, and power are all significant variables when determining who benefits from the interactions between male and female hosts and guests. Is the winner always the tourist? Or is it always the dominant man? How do the players justify their actions?

## **Caribbean Tourism**

Now that I have analyzed the major trends of the literature on the anthropology of tourism, I will narrow the topic and focus more specifically on tourism in the Caribbean. The Caribbean is one of the most popular regions in the world to vacation (Pattullo, 2005). The main attraction is the global beach (Lofgren, 2010): the clear turquoise waters, coral reefs with exotic species of fish, soft white sands, and clear blue skies where the sun is always shining. It is a relaxing vacation where tourists have no responsibilities, no real reason to leave their towel and beach chair, and they can be waited upon by extremely friendly local people. However, as we have learned, this peaceful and relaxing vacation doesn't come cost-free. A unique combination of factors plays into the issues surrounding Caribbean tourism including history, geographic location, and natural resources. Although some of these topics have already been referenced, some points are worth reiterating to paint a clearer picture of the tourism industry specific to the Caribbean. The literature here suggests the vulnerability of the region and the seemingly

endless cycle of repression by the First World. (Beckles, 1990; G. Gmelch, 2003; Pattullo, 2005 & 2010; Strachan, 2002)

### **Neocolonialism**

The Caribbean islands were all former European colonies. Slaves were transported from Africa by the colonizers to work on plantations and as servants doing menial work for little pay and with little to no human rights. As the regions' Amerindian populations disintegrated, the region consisted of white planters and mostly black slaves. Post-emancipation, the West Indian-born natives are black slave descendants who now find themselves working in the tourism industry, the largest industry in the region, serving white European and North American tourists. With this transition, the literature suggests that tourism is a form of neocolonialism. Now instead of working for the white planters as slaves, they're serving the white tourists as their waiters, maids, guides, bartenders, etc. (Beckles, 1990; G. Gmelch, 2003; Pattullo, 2005 & 2010; Strachan, 2002)

Ian Gregory Strachan (2002) draws a comparison between plantations and hotels and their racial implications. Both businesses are exploitive, the government shapes both of their policies, and both businesses monopolize the land. Strachan, similar to other tourism scholars, argues that it is ignorant for vacationers to view the Caribbean as a paradise because of its dark history. "Paradise" and "plantation" are polar opposite in definition, yet they are treated as compatible by tourists. Caribbean tourism industries are even trying to promote heritage tourism by transforming former plantation homes into hotels. Some argue that if the Caribbean people choose to represent themselves and their culture in such a manor, they will never escape the racial oppression of the white man.



This sense of history repeating itself is what suggests that tourism is a form of neocolonialism.

### **Economic Vulnerabilities**

Numerous factors result in the economic vulnerabilities of the Caribbean region. Even the unchangeable factors of the islands' small size and landscape work against their economic strength. Since resorts and tourist attractions are increasingly taking over coastlines and large portions of the island, detriments to the industry will spatially affect major portions of each country. They have few natural resources, and what they do have is not enough to dominate any market. The Caribbean's appeal as a beach destination has been bringing increasing numbers of tourists to the region, enough to allow the tourism industry to surpass agriculture (also a form of neocolonialism; a mark left by former colonial powers) as the region's largest economic contributor during the early 1990s. (Strachan, 2002; Pattullo, 2005)

The region-wide product is what Lofgren calls "the global beach" (Lofgren, 2010). It is difficult for countries to differentiate themselves from their neighboring West Indian countries when virtually all tourists who travel there are looking for the same thing: the sun, sand, and sea vacation. Caribbean countries have become forced to develop a niche that can set them apart from the other countries (for example, Jamaica uses reggae and Dominica uses ecotourism). But regardless of how strong their niche is, most tourists arbitrarily choose their tourist destination. They are generally less interested in culture, seeing all Caribbean countries as the same, and are more interested in the best deals and lowest prices. This creates a race to the bottom for Caribbean countries. The tourism market keeps lowering their prices so they can appear as the more attractive

tourist destination in comparison to their competition. Therefore, they make less money off of each tourist that comes (Pattullo, 2005).

The concept of the race to the bottom also applies on the micro level, with individual workers in the tourism industry. Caribbean tourism workers have failed to unionize and therefore are generally paid very low-wages. They cannot strike or request more money because there will always be another person willing to take their job under the same conditions. Workers are forced to settle for low wages and poor worker benefits because, after all, a poor job is better than no job. On both the macro and micro levels, the vicious cycle of the race to the bottom keeps Caribbean economies in the Third World where they are always at the mercy of First World powers (Pattullo, 2005 & 2010).

Furthermore, everything is owned by foreign investors. Although this trend is slowly moving in the opposite direction (G. Gmelch, 2011), the majority of big businesses are owned by European, American, or Canadian companies. This includes travel agents, major resorts, and cruise lines. Therefore, most dollars spent on a Caribbean vacation don't in fact remain in the host country's economy. This concept is referred to as *leakage* (Pattullo, 2005 & 2010). The leakages are high and are nearly impossible to reverse. If a Caribbean country ever wanted to request more money from their foreign investors, the foreign investors could boycott that individual country and bring their business elsewhere, somewhere that will accept less money.

Tourists are also pumping less money into the local economy by not venturing outside of tourist areas to experience (and spend money on) local culture. The all-inclusive resort and all-inclusive cruise vacations are becoming ever more popular because they allow tourists to pay a flat rate for their vacation, know what they're paying

ahead of time, and then take advantage of those deals. This results in tourists staying within the compound of their all-inclusive resort, only shopping at the duty-free stores at the cruise port, and eating all of their meals on board their ship. There is little incentive to spend money at locally-owned stores and restaurants.

The infrastructure required for mass tourism is such a huge investment that Caribbean countries deem it essential that they do everything they can to keep tourists coming to their island to make the construction worth the expense. The airports, roads, waste management facilities, filtration systems for clean drinking water, and cruise-ship ports are so costly that they require the influx of tourists to utilize them and help pay for them.

Even more detrimental to local economies is the cruise-ship industry (Pattullo, 2010). Cruise ships are essentially floating resorts, in which the boat itself is the attraction, not the individual islands. They are foreign owned and they operate under their own regulations; untied to any government labor regulations. Therefore, they can hire labor from whomever they choose, rarely being natives to the islands in which they dock. In the few short hours that the ship is docked, cruise tourists are mostly interested in generic duty-free shopping which pumps essentially no money into the local economy. Many tourists won't even leave the ship if they think the shopping will be better at another island and if they know they've already paid for their meals on board ahead of time. Yet despite the poor contributions that cruise ships make to the local economy, each country must still invest and pay high prices for the infrastructure required to dock a massive ship. And they cannot threaten to raise a head tax or else the cruise lines will, without hesitation, boycott that particular island.

Tourism in general, but particularly cruise-ship tourism, has incredibly negative impacts on the environment and landscape, which is ironically the product the Caribbean region has to sell.

Peter Odle, then president of the Barbados Hotel Association, was another aggrieved hotelier. “I was against the cruise ships from the beginning,” he said. “The Caribbean will not realize the cruise business until it’s nearly too late. The cruise ships are using our most precious asset—the sea—polluting it like hell and not making any significant contribution to our economy. And instead of taking a firm stand, the governments are all over the place; there is a lack of political will.” (Pattullo, 2010: 404)

The cruise industry is highlighting a major vulnerability of Caribbean tourism. Since the product across the region is the global beach, the Caribbean will be in trouble if their biggest offering/attraction is ruined. Scholars like Dennison Nash (2001) and Eve Chambers (2000) express their fear of the depletion of beaches and reefs with the greenhouse gas effect and rising water levels. Also, natural disasters can change the environmental landscape of an island overnight, exposing these countries to virtual economic failure without their beaches.

Odle also acknowledges that the initial appeal of the cruise-ship industry has put the Caribbean into an irreversible situation. Major regional sanctions and policy changes must occur in order for these small islands to gain any economical autonomy.

To compensate for the Caribbean’s major product of the global beach, each country is trying to establish their own type of niche tourism to set their package apart from the other countries, and to supply an alternative to their beaches if they were to deplete. Popular niches are heritage tourism, ecotourism, sport tourism, and adventure tourism. They also try to highlight certain unique aspects of their culture to differ their image from the other beach destinations. Music and festivals are examples of this.

However, as we learned earlier, there are downsides to this too. Pushing heritage tourism and placing tourists inside old plantation homes could be seen as reliving slave days (Strachan, 2002). And by pushing cultural traditions, like music and festivals, they risk becoming commodified or enhanced to the point of inauthenticity and decreasing cultural significance.

Tourism in developing countries is an extremely risky market. Not only are they vulnerable to their First World investors and tourists, but overnight a destination can become unfit for tourism. Things such as natural disasters, terrorist attacks, and political instability, things that are hard, if not impossible, for the host countries to control, can damage the environmental landscape or the safety of travel to their country. The political economy of tourist destinations, particularly Caribbean/other Third World countries that rely on tourism as their major source of foreign exchange, is incredibly unstable. These tourist destinations are subject to the First World and to the course of Mother Nature and they hold little control over their own destiny, reinforcing the economic disparities in which these developing countries ironically aim to overcome through tourism. (Pattullo, 2005 & 2010)

### **Host/Guest Relations**

The most essential part of understanding the host/guest relations in the Caribbean is the tourists' notion of the imagined, exotic Other. Before even arriving at their Caribbean destination, the tourists' preconception of the local people is backward, natural, exotic, erotic, and primitive. The literature argues that the host/guest relations that occur in the Caribbean are largely based on this idea. On the flipside, locals immediately attach dollar values to white tourists and their interactions are based on what

kinds of monetary gains they can get from the tourist. (Brennan, 2010; Kempadoo, 1999; Lofgren, 2010; Pruitt & LaFont, 2010)

Some countries, like Barbados, are known for their repeat guests (Gmelch, 2003). Often the reason behind habitually revisiting the same country is because of the kindness of the local people. This, in turn, also becomes a crucial part of a country's marketing strategy (Prichard Wright, 1992). This raises the question of how genuine the local people's friendliness really is. Are they genuinely nice people? Or are they forced to be over-the-top friendly by their employers/government initiatives? Regardless, the locals' friendliness and openness to assist white foreigners is another key component to the host/guest relations.

When tourists go on vacation, they have the expectation of good service. In tandem with the notion of tourism being a form of neocolonialism, some argue that good service is really a form of servitude. Without the symbolic chains of slavery, host/guest relations could be based on the local people's submission to the superior white person. Even though this is the thought of most scholars, I question the degree to which the typical tourism worker *consciously* thinks of him/herself as a servant to the white person.

A very written-about topic in this field is that of sex and romance tourism. In the Caribbean, with the tourists' image of the exotic Other, he/she often comes to the Caribbean looking for a romantic/sexual experience. Denise Brennan's (2010) study of sex work in the Dominican Republic, Joan Phillips' (1999) study of beach boys in Barbados, and Deborah Pruitt and Suzanne LaFont's (2010) study of "Rent-a-Dreads" in Jamaica all discuss the different dimensions of these intimate relations between hosts and guests in the Caribbean.

Brennan looked at young Dominican women who migrate to the town of Sosúa in the Dominican Republic to become sex workers. Sosúa is known to foreign men as a hotspot for local prostitutes, so many come looking to experience sexual relations with a Dominican woman. These are poor women who dream of finding a rich tourist man who will ideally agree to support her for life. Although her chances are extremely unlikely, the few success stories are well-known so women continue to do it. She sees the situation as an economic opportunity, a chance to move up in the world. However, this is an incredibly unlikely result and a risky practice. It takes her away from the regular workforce and limits her chance of accumulating any money. And by the time she's in her 30s, she'll be sexually undesirable to foreign men, have little money saved, and have no real work experience. Additionally, she runs the risk of abuse and sexually transmitted diseases.

The male tourist sees his vacation to Sosúa as a unique opportunity to fulfill his sexual fantasies of a foreign woman. Since he is paying for her services, he has the ability to get exactly what he wants; multiple women, teenagers, etc. It's also an opportunity for him to reestablish his masculinity and need for dominance over women, which, given the circumstances of his personal life, he may be lacking. Sex tourism is a situation in which he can do this without any stigma following him home (Brennan, 2010).

In Sosúa, it is arguably the man that holds the power. He has the money and the physical strength to get what he wants out of the exchange. However, she might argue that she holds a portion of the power because she's using her female prowess to seduce him for money. I agree with Brennan's assessment of the interaction in that the man holds the power over the woman. Sexual relations in the Caribbean have proved to become a

major discourse and this case in Sosúa exemplifies the complexities of gender, race, money, and power. However, the studies in Jamaica and Barbados are a bit more complex when female tourists are seeking sex and romance from local men.

Pruitt and LaFont's study in Jamaica observed the interactions between white female tourists and local Jamaican men. The tourists were generally single women, looking for an exotic sexual experience and often for a local guide and companion for her trip. She may want a one-night-stand, or she may want a boyfriend for her trip. Jamaican men often prefer tourist women to Jamaican women because they're more openly sexual, less pushy, and exhibit less pride. Like male tourists in the Dominican, she's able to have sex with whomever she chooses and the stigma of being a "slut" wouldn't follow her home. She may also seek the attention that she may not get from men at home. His intentions are generally monetary. After repeated relations, emotional feelings may develop, but his initial intentions are to find a tourist woman that looks wealthy, make her feel good (emotionally and physically), and offer to be her local guide for the duration of her vacation. For his services, she repays him with gifts, meals at nice restaurants, and drinks.

Her attraction to him is generally based off of her imagined conceptions of a Jamaican Rastafarian; a natural, down-to-earth, affectionate man. The stereotype of a Rastafarian is someone with dreadlocks, and therefore they have become the global way to conceptualize a Jamaican. For this reason, even if the men aren't in fact religious Rastas, they'll grow their hair out into dreadlocks to appear more appealing to the female tourist. These men are locally referred to as Rent-a-Dreads, and they are stigmatized within their local community for being posers. In a way, he feels privileged for escorting



a rich white woman around his island, but it is also frowned upon by many locals. If the relationship continues after her vacation ends, she may (ideally for him) continue to support him by wiring him money. These relationships can result in one of them moving to the other's home. This is usually unsuccessful because her image of him as her exotic and masculine dream-man is shattered when he proves to be incompetent and dependent on her in her homeland. If she moves in with him, she'll discover that he is a social outcast, not the dominant man she perceived him to be. And he may resort back to his local gender roles of male dominance and try to control her (Pruitt and Lafont, 2010).

Phillips' study in Barbados of the relations between local beach boys and tourist women shared many of the same trends as the Jamaican case. The imagined Barbadian man doesn't have dreadlocks, so the issue of the inauthentic Rent-a-Dread is not applicable. Another major difference is that Barbadian men are proud to court white women with them and it is less socially stigmatized by other Barbadians. Barbadian men emphasized their selection in choosing which women to go after. They have ways of detecting which women have the most money. Money over physical appearance draws stronger attraction upon first glance. This is empowering for the Barbadian man because it makes him think he has the upper hand in getting at her money (Phillips, 1999).

The question remains: who carries more power? Is it the white female tourist who can control her man with her money, her sexual freedoms, and her ability to achieve her desired level of emotional commitment? Or is it the local man who uses her for her money, status, and sex? What is more dominant, money or gender? And what social advantages/disadvantages does the local who is sleeping with a tourist see? The answers are not clear, but they certainly bring forth new questions in how to conceptualize race,

gender, money, and power in regards to the sexual/emotional relations between hosts and guests.

One conclusion is made clear by these scholars' observations of the interactions between hosts and guests; people act differently while they're on tour. They feel a sense of superiority and invincibility, like they can do whatever they want and it doesn't matter. They hold their own behavior to very different standards than they would at home. They treat people differently while they're on tour. Their perceptions of the Other can turn locals into sexual objects or subordinate people. (Chambers, 2000; Nash, 1997; Urry, 2002)

### **Barbados: History through the Present**

To narrow the focus of this review even more, I will outline what the literature says about Barbados' history and how it has shaped the current personality of the country. Barbados' dark slave past is not atypical to the history of the other Caribbean nations. Hilary Beckles (1990) does a good job of walking through Barbados' history and showing how today's Bajan culture came to be.

Prior to English settlement in 1625, Barbados was inhabited by Amerindians of Arawakan ethnicity. They were skilled farmers and fishermen. Their villages clustered around the rocky coasts where there was available fresh drinking water and where their defenses were stronger and they were safer from any enemy. But their population was so small that they failed at even the most minimal resistance against English settlers.

Permanent British settlement began in 1627 when settlers finally decided to use the flat and arable land for agriculture. Beginning in the 1630s when political

organization began, Barbados began its history as an elitist colony. Only landholders with considerable money were considered to have political rights. Planters experimented with tobacco, cotton, and indigo before settling on sugar cane as the main crop of the colony. They soon started importing African slaves and British prisoners as indentured servants to work on the plantations. In 1636, slavery was politically recognized when Governor Henry Hawley passed a law saying that any black or Indian babies born in Barbados would remain slaves for life. And thus began the 197-year slave history of Barbados, a colony ruled by the elite “plantocracy.”

Barbados’ slave history was relatively quiet compared to the rest of the Caribbean. As the largest sugar producer of the West Indies and the colony with the fewest attempted revolts, Barbados stood as a model for the other islands for how to best control their slaves. Barbados’ forests were chopped down and replaced with cane fields. It was a very densely settled island (in 1800, 600 people per square mile compared to Jamaica’s 14). The English and slave populations were also (unintentionally) mostly female. This resulted in particularly strong familial values and a more sedate and tempered mentality of the planters. Blacks even regularly attended church services and schools. Their African roots started to diminish, seeing as, by law, they were only allowed to adhere to their indigenous practices in private gatherings. Their population and culture became more Creole but some cultural aspects like music, dance, the arts, language, and mortuary practices were lasting. Culture was becoming Afro-Barbadian and Euro-Creole (Beckles, 1990: 54).

In 1807 the slave trade was abolished. In 1833, the Emancipation bill passed through Parliament. There was a very longstanding period, ending just prior to

emancipation, in which there were no slave revolts in Barbados when the rest of the Caribbean was up in arms. One theory of this is because Barbados was guarded by the best militia (as the easternmost country, it was the closest target for any European invasions) so slaves knew revolts would be useless. Therefore, there was a certain level of comfort and trust between planters and slaves that didn't exist elsewhere in the region. Slaves saw their route to freedom as one of compliance and non-violent protest. Post-emancipation, it took a number of years for blacks to get their feet on the ground and become independent of white employment. By the turn of the century, they had greatly mobilized to create numerous self-help and support organizations for themselves and to become less marginalized under white law. In 1950 a bill was passed for universal suffrage and in 1966 Barbados gained independence from England. "The country has certainly lived up to the challenges of nationhood, and citizens pride themselves for being among those American nations with the highest material living standards and greatest democratic freedoms," (Beckles, 1990: 210).

Barbados' slave history was relatively tame and their progression to emancipation, universal suffrage, democracy, and freedom was quite linear. I think that their course of history is strongly connected to their current lifestyle and reputation among the other Caribbean nations. Barbados is known to have the most friendly and community-oriented people. They are supposed to be the most welcoming to tourists and the most easy-going. Perhaps Barbados' personality is a product of the course of their slave history. However, I do not want to undermine the brutality, the struggles, and the oppression that came along with Barbados' slave history. In fact, Kamala Kempadoo (1999) discussed the origins of sex tourism, prostitution, and host/guest sexual

relationships in Barbados by attributing the regional prevalence of these practices to the oppression that slave women endured by their planter masters. Their masters were free to use and sexually abuse their female slaves/servants without repercussions. Post-emancipation, many former slave women turned to prostitution and sex work as a means to make money because it's all they felt equip to do. In Barbados, the sex workers tend to be male, but there is no doubt that the race/gender relationships between planters and slaves have translated to the same power issues behind sex and romance tourism that we uncover today.

Today, Barbados typically brings in 4 times its population in tourists annually (G. Gmelch, 2011). Tourism became its major market, surpassing the sugar industry, in the early 1990s. Its major selling point is the friendliness of its people. It is currently working on strengthening its heritage tourism and an initiative that connects Africa's diaspora to the motherland. It is also trying to increase the number of stay-cationers to try to keep Barbadians' tourist dollars in their own economy. They are finding that the tourists are more educated and are looking for a more cultural experience, opposed to spending all hours lying on the beach. This should fare well for the local economy if they can respond by establishing some sustainable attractions for tourists that will get them outside of their resorts to experience the rest of the island and spend their money at locally-owned stores and restaurants. Also, more and more Bajans are moving up to ownership, managerial, and head positions in the industry. (G. Gmelch, 2011)

Barbados' population is over 285,000 (The World Factbook, 2010), 10% of whom are directly employed (while many more are indirectly employed) in the tourism industry. Geographically, it's a small island, only 21 miles long and 14 miles wide (G. Gmelch,

2011). The West and South coasts are densely developed with resort after resort to accommodate most of the island's tourists. These coasts have the best beaches on the island. The East coast, on the other hand, is rockier with fewer beaches and dangerous undertows unfit for tourists.

### **Interactions between Tourists and Bartenders**

Finally, after uncovering the major issues discussed in the discourse of the anthropology of tourism—political economy, commodification of culture, authenticity, and the relations between hosts and guests—I have discovered what area interests me most and where my personal research could contribute to this broader scholarly discourse. When analyzing the interactions between hosts and guests, most conclusions are thematic, dealing with race, gender, money, and power. Besides the vague subfield of sex and romance tourism, the literature lacks the analyses of situational interactions and often it lacks the local's voice. I want to study the interactions between hosts and guests in a specific setting—the bar—and discover how these interactions relate to the broader themes discussed above.

In James P. Spradley and Brenda J. Mann's 2008 ethnography, *The Cocktail Waitress: Women's Work in a Man's World*, these sociologists spent time in Brady's Bar, an American family-owned off-campus bar, to uncover the inner workings and the employee-employer, employee-employee, and employee-customer relationships. They discovered that the bar was an extremely gendered arena that represented male dominance through type of work, speech patterns, stereotypes, and the spatial setting of the bar. These conclusions are not particularly relevant to my own research regarding

tourism, but it does exemplify how the setting of a bar can be an accurate representation/metaphor for real societal issues at hand.

In my own case, I am particularly interested in the host/guest relations in tourism and how the nature of these interactions may relate back to the broader themes represented in the tourism discourse. Barbados is known for having the friendliest population. I want to uncover whether this generalization is genuine or if, like much of the literature suggests, workers' intentions are always monetary. I also want to uncover the discrepancies between the tourist locations and areas of the countries in which tourists stray from, which will beg the question of the visible effects of tourism on local culture. The literature on tourism is extremely negative and pegs tourism as an exploitive and imperialist industry. I want to uncover how the actual workers feel about their situation and their role. I want to give the worker a voice, which is also underrepresented in tourism literature.

Marx's notion of false consciousness is relevant in this discourse, and I want to avoid this outlook. I have noticed the trend in which most scholars in the field share the condescending notion that, even if a worker was to say that they were happy and enjoyed their job, it's only because they don't know any better and they don't understand that they're actually oppressed and disadvantaged. To some degree, this may be accurate. However, I want to avoid using a lens that is superior and paternalistic to the workers and trust that if they say they're happy with their job, they could be genuinely happy with their job.

Inspired by Spradley and Mann's research, I want to use the bar as the setting for which I begin to answer these heavy questions. The bar is a place in which a bartender

*serves* a tourist—does serving tourists in a post-colonial setting automatically imply neocolonialism? It is also a place in which alcohol is present, altering the personality of the tourist—how might this change the nature of their interactions? Is drunkenness rude or disrespectful? Also, bartenders are viewed as “professional talkers” where they act more as a therapist than as solely a server of drinks—what do they talk about? What do tourists care about? Could it be possible that working in the tourism industry could be fun or interesting? By hearing the local bartenders’ voice, I want to uncover how they perceive their interactions with tourists and how consistent they are with the anthropologists’ mostly negative assessments of tourism.



# CHAPTER 1

## The Presence of Tourism in Barbados

The impact of tourism in Barbados is undeniable. Tourism is essential for maintaining Barbados' place in the global economic community. The relative scope of the industry is massive and many people are involved and on such a small and densely populated island, not one person is unaffected by tourism. One can't help but notice the presence of the First World and its impact on the environmental, social, and political realms. This chapter provides an overview of the geographical island (the landscape, the beaches, the tourist areas, etc), the demographics of the workers and the tourists, the tourist attractions and what tourists actually do while on vacation, and finally the government goals and policies to improve the tourism industry. This will set the stage for understanding the meaning and context behind the bartenders' words in Chapter 2 and a complete cultural analysis of the impact of tourism on Bajan culture in Chapter 3.

The information provided in this chapter is a compilation of my own field research in Barbados and Professor George Gmelch's updated information in *Behind the Smile* (2011). Gmelch's statistics and figures were heavily drawn from "Barbados Stay-over Visitor Survey" and "Barbados Cruise Passenger Survey," both 2007 documents published by the Ministry of Tourism.

## The Island



*Map of Barbados, courtesy of Owners Direct*

Barbados is the easternmost island in the Caribbean. Unlike the surrounding volcanic and mountainous islands, Barbados has a very flat terrain, making it most favorable to agriculture. The majority of the island is covered by sugar plantations divided by small, densely packed villages, or lush gullies that accommodate the green monkey. The West coast is home to some of the world's most beautiful beaches; soft white sand, a gentle tide, and colorful reefs. The North and East coasts have a strong undertow and are very rocky, making it dangerous to swim. The coasts are generally littered with brightly painted fishing boats with fishermen catching Barbados' famous flying fish. Barbados enjoys a tropical climate of 77° in the winter to 81° in the summer with water temperatures around 80° (G. Gmlech, 2011). Summertime brings almost daily

heavy rainfalls which don't typically last long and are followed by clear skies and a dry earth within minutes.

Barbados is a small island, only 14 miles wide and 21 miles long, 167 square miles. It is inhabited by 285,000 people (The World Factbook, 2010), making it one of the most densely populated countries in the world. However, the population is very unevenly dispersed. The island is divided into 11 parishes, which are further divided by village. Bridgetown, Barbados' capital, is located in Saint Michael in the south of the island. Bridgetown and the surrounding villages are the most densely populated areas, the population spreading thinner moving north and east, with the exception of Speightstown and Holetown on the West coast. While doing my fieldwork, I lived in Checker Hall, a village in the northernmost parish of Saint Lucy which was known in Barbados as being "*country*", far removed, and thinly settled.

Despite the island's small size, the narrow and winding roads and increasing number of cars make traveling slow. By bus, which was reliable and ran fairly frequently, traveling from Speightstown to Bridgetown could take about an hour. For this reason, most tourists avoid the inexpensive public transportation and rent cars if they choose to venture out of their resort.

As noted above, the beaches along the West coast are most favorable for swimming, which makes it the most ideal area for tourists. Therefore, the entire West coast is littered with hotels, resorts, restaurants, boutiques, and gift shops for tourists. The West coast holds the island's more upscale accommodations. Holetown in Saint James is home to the most posh hotels and resorts on the island. For example, Sandy Lane is one of the most exclusive hotels in the world where one guest could spend up to \$15,000 per

night ([www.sandylane.com](http://www.sandylane.com)). With such expensive rates, the upscale West coast generally draws an older, more mature crowd. Conversely, the South coast attracts the younger, rowdier, and more middle class guests. The South coast beaches aren't as pristine (although still beautiful and safe), the hotels are cheaper, and there is much more nightlife. St. Lawrence Gap, located in Christ Church, is the major hotspot for tourist nightlife. Apart from the overdeveloped tourist belts of the West and South coasts that hold nearly 150 different accommodation establishments (Yearwood, 13 July 2010), there are only a few other hotels and guest houses scattered around the other coastlines, but they would be much more isolated and private if that's what interests the guest.

Upon arrival, most tourists are surprised with the modern development of Barbados. The Grantley Adams International Airport (located in Christ Church) gives off an impressive first impression of Barbados' advanced infrastructure. Most tourists expect a simple Third World country and are taken aback by the abundance of First World elements; modern architecture, familiar fast food chains, locals talking on their BlackBerrys, popular clothes brands, and plasma televisions in every other restaurant. This effect of globalization has become unavoidable given the island's small size and the increasing contact between locals and foreigners. As one moves away from the main tourist belts into the more rural areas, these globalization effects are less obvious. However, standards for material things, such as technology, still mirror the clearly advanced world that the tourists are exposed to. For example, in Saint Lucy, the northernmost Parish in which tourists rarely venture, most houses and every rum shop have televisions, many homes have wireless internet, and most people have cell phones. But I will speculate that these increasing standards are not necessarily meant to impress

and attract visitors. In Saint Lucy for example, the roads are windy, often not wide enough for 2 vehicles to pass one another, there are abandoned chattel houses everywhere, and there are unemployed people sitting on their doorsteps watching the days go by. These are images and windows into parts of Bajan culture that don't fit into the typical tourist's image of a tropical paradise. Yet the tourism authorities put forth no real effort to hide this from the public. In fact, there are tourist attractions in Saint Lucy which authorities wish received more business, but don't because they're so far away from everything else. So I can speculate that many elements of the First World are not for show, but are the unavoidable effects of globalization.

### **The Workers**

Tourism is essential for Barbados' economy because tourist expenditure is the biggest contributor to the GDP (25-30%) and 55% of foreign exchange (Jordan, 29 June 2010). The per capita GDP is roughly \$22,000; 60<sup>th</sup> in the world and 6<sup>th</sup> in the Caribbean (The World Factbook, 2010). "Tourism has enabled Barbadians to have one of the highest per-capita incomes in the Caribbean. Over 90 percent of Bajan households have a television and a refrigerator, and nearly half own a car," (G. Gmelch, 2011, Chapter 1). Given the extremely high population density and the strong overlap between tourist areas and local inhabitants, all of Barbados is touched in some way or another by the tourism industry. "Tourism has created new employment at the rate of about one job for every hotel bed on the island. Ten percent of Barbadians are directly employed in the industry as maids and security guards, waitresses and barmen, receptionists and gardeners, and so forth," (G. Gmelch, 2011, Chapter 1). Moreover, a large percentage of Bajans – 19.8%,

according to Gale Yearwood, the Chief Research Officer at the Ministry of Tourism (figures from 2006) – indirectly work in the tourism industry; for example, mechanics fixing rental cars or truck drivers distributing food to restaurants. (Compare these figures to 3.6% of the labor force working in the sugar industry, according to the 2006 BTA Annual Report.) And many people indirectly working in the tourism industry are self-employed; local artists and musicians, people selling their personally-grown produce, personal jet-ski operators, and even beach boys roaming around hotel beaches looking to woo foreign women fall into this category. And for those who work in sectors completely separate from tourism, they still experience tourism's effects socially and through the island's landscape and infrastructure.

When the tourism industry first took off in Barbados, surpassing the sugar industry during the 1990s, most of the managerial and executive positions belonged to foreigners, namely Europeans and North Americans. This created a glass ceiling which made it nearly impossible for Bajans to be promoted to that level. However, even in the past 10 years, this has turned around and now more than ever, locals are holding important managerial positions at hotels and restaurants, breaking down the former glass ceiling. With locals holding the positions of head and executive chefs, more local produce is being used and reducing the overall leakage from the economy. Before more upper-level jobs belonged to Bajans, the tourism industry used to be seen as containing mostly undesirable jobs. However in recent years many more important jobs belong to Bajans, so there is much less stigma attached to working in the tourism industry. Most jobs require education and rigorous training, so many positions are well respected.

While there are not statistics available describing the breakdown of the jobs held by male and female workers in the industry, there have been some notable sociological effects of the tourism industry on gender roles, for women in particular. “Some of them did not have a wage-paying job before being employed in tourism. The overwhelming majority of the applicants to the Barbados Hospitality Institute are also women,” (G. Gmelch, 2003: 34). The flock of women joining the workforce through the tourism industry had both positive and negative effects. Many of these jobs are stereotypical “women’s work” (cooking, cleaning, etc) which could be seen as reiterating female inferiority. Additionally, one study showed the presence of women in the workforce as putting strain on traditional family life with women gaining power in the household and causing jealousy by dressing up to serve hotel guests. However, the response to increased numbers of women working is changing.

“A subsequent study of the same population three years later, however, reported increased family income, greater independence, an increased sense of self-worth, expanded contacts with fellow employees, and an expanded worldview. Moreover, the wives’ husbands had assumed more household and child-rearing chores and had developed more respect for their wives as competent individuals able to hold good jobs.” (G. Gmelch, 2003: 34-35)

Although the short-term effects of women joining the workforce through the tourism industry proved to be problematic in the private sphere, the long-term effects have been essential for women to gain ground in Barbados.

## **The Tourists**

In 2007, the most recently published data, Barbados attracted 22.5 million tourists (Yearwood, 13 July 2010). This figure represents both stay-over and cruise ship tourists,

which each typically draw half of the island's visitors. Cruise ship tourists stay for less than a day and spend much less money than stay-over guests because their meals and accommodation are included in their cruise package, leaving them as very minimal contributors to the GDP. They dock in Bridgetown and get to spend around 6 hours touring the island. They generally spend their time and money at duty-free shopping centers, they might hire a cab driver for the day and tour the island to visit any major attractions that they're interested in, or they might choose to spend the day at the beach. Regardless, their expenditure is far less than the stay-over guests, spending on average only \$56 per day next to the stay-over guests' \$166.60 (G. Gmelch, 2011, Chapter 1; drawn from the Annual Statistical Digest, 2008). In 2006, there were 539,100 cruise ship tourists and 536,000 stay-over visitors. "Compared to other Caribbean nations, Barbados had twice as many visitors annually as Bermuda, St. Lucia, and Antigua, but only a third as many as the Bahamas and Jamaica," (G. Gmelch, 2011, Chapter 1; drawn from the Annual Statistical Digest, 2008).

The global events of the past 10 years have brought forth some fluctuation in the number of tourist arrivals in Barbados. "The terrorist attacks of 9/11, for example, causing a worldwide financial slump and concerns about the safety of international travel caused a 7% drop in visitor arrivals to the island in the year following the attack, and a 2% drop the following year. By 2004, however, tourist numbers in Barbados had returned to their pre-9/11 levels," (G. Gmelch, 2011, Chapter 1). The recent global recession has also brought forth a slump in tourist arrivals, a concern brought forth by Gale Yearwood and Colin Jordan, the President of the Barbados Hotel and Tourism



Association (BHTA). These factors emphasize some of the major vulnerabilities of the industry addressed in the Literature Review.

The tourists are overwhelmingly British and North American. (According to Colin Jordan, the Barbados Tourism Authority has offices in the UK, Germany, Canada, and the US, and numerous other representatives scattered across North America and Europe.) In the early years of tourism, most visitors came from Britain, Barbados' mother country. After World War II, North American visitors exceeded the British, but in more recent years, they have mostly evened out. North American tourists make up the majority of cruise ship passengers because cruises are more popular there and the Caribbean is in closer proximity to embarkation ports than for Britain. Furthermore, European tourists generally have much longer vacation periods than North Americans, particularly Americans, so the length of their stays nearly doubles (average of 10 days to Americans' 5). 90% of American tourists claim that Barbados was the sole destination of their vacation while 24% of European visitors plan on visiting other Caribbean islands. This likely has to do with their longer vacation periods and the fact that they traveled farther from home, so they want to maximize their experience by covering more ground (G. Gmelch, 2011, Chapter 1).

The most popular time to vacation in Barbados is during the winter months, with Christmas and New Years being the busiest time of the year. During tourist season, rates tend to be higher, but the heat, humidity, and rain are less intense and more comfortable for those unaccustomed to tropical climates. There don't seem to be any trends regarding *where* on the island the different nationalities stay. The division of guests who stay on the

West coast versus the South coast is not so much attached to nationality as it is to the wealth of the guest.

According to the Ministry of Tourism's latest survey, Barbados Stay-Over Visitor Survey, the motivation behind 80% of tourists' trips was to "vacation." The remaining 20% fall in the categories of business or visiting friends/relatives. Over 50% of the visitors were enjoying their first time in Barbados while 30% were enjoying at *least* their 4<sup>th</sup> visit to the island. Repeat guests are an area of major pride among Barbados' tourism officials. The BTA even issues newsletters and holds celebrations to publicly induct and honor guests who have visited Barbados over 25 times into an exclusive club, the Over Five and Twenty Sojourns in Barbados club. The survey also states that 72% of visitors stated their reason for choosing Barbados as their vacation destination were the beaches and climate while 20% stated culture/heritage. In terms of satisfaction, 60% of visitors said they would "definitely" come back while 31% claimed "probably." Most cruise ship passengers also expressed interest in returning as a stay-over passenger (G. Gmlech, 2011). Tourist satisfaction is largely in regards to their accommodation, the beaches, and the friendly local people. However they do receive negative remarks, too. "They gave lower ratings, and were sometimes critical of the service, 'duty-free prices' and 'local handicrafts and souvenirs.' The capital city of Bridgetown also received only average ratings, with some criticism regarding cleanliness, lack of signage, and limited entertainment opportunities," (G. Gmelch, 2011, Chapter 1).

## **Tourist Attractions/What Tourists Do**

Most tourists claim the reason for their visit was to “vacation.” For decades leading up to now, and it is still somewhat true today, to “vacation” in the tropical Caribbean meant to relax on the beach while being served by friendly locals. Today, although the beaches are obviously a main attraction and perhaps *the* reason to choose Barbados over another global destination, a new trend sees tourists venturing outside the property of their resorts to enjoy the local culture. Some speculate that with heightened awareness of skin cancer, people are looking to escape the intense sun and seek entertainment elsewhere. Given the demographics of Barbados’ current tourists in a time of economic recession, most people who can afford to vacation are wealthy and likely educated. Therefore, there is more value and emphasis placed on enjoying a cultural experience while on tour. To meet the needs of tourists who seek entertainment beyond their beach chair, Barbados has a good selection of tourist attractions.

Unlike Dominica, Guyana, or St. Lucia, Barbados is not known for their ecology or ecotourism. However, they do have some notable natural attractions. Harrison’s Cave in Saint Thomas is one of Barbados’ most popular attractions where tourists get to travel through the cave by tram. Also widely popular natural attractions are Andromeda Botanic Gardens and Flower Forest (Saint Joseph), the Barbados Wildlife Reserve (Saint Peter), and the Animal Flower Cave (Saint Lucy). There are also 4x4 tours and hikes/walks intended to showcase Barbados’ landscape.

Barbados also has numerous attractions to celebrate its history and contemporary culture. The George Washington House (located in Saint Michael) is a former plantation house that George Washington lived in for two months in 1751; the only other country

that Washington visited/resided other than America. This is a source of pride and honor for Barbados and also something that would be of great significance to many of their American tourists. The Nidhe Israel Synagogue, Cemetery, and Museum (located in Bridgetown, Saint Michael) celebrate the oldest synagogue in the Western hemisphere (built in 1654) and Jewish history in Barbados. Barbados has a very small Jewish population, but again, this is something that they feel should be honored and might be of great interest to their visitors. The Barbados National Museum (located in Saint Michael) resides in the former British Military Prison and celebrates Barbados' heritage from Amerindian artifacts to plantation home furnishings. The Arlington House (located in Speightstown, Saint Peter) provides an educational look at the first major port in Barbados, Barbados' first settlers, and the effect of colonialism and plantation life on Barbados' history. Saint Nicholas Abbey (located in Saint Peter) is a restored 1658 plantation home with impressive architecture and antique home furnishings. There is also an interactive look at plantation life, sugar production, and a rum distillery. These are some of Barbados' most popular attractions among tourists for honoring Barbados' heritage. Many locals might find the attractions insignificant to them, like the George Washington House or the Nidhe Israel Synagogue, and are more applicable to visitors' backgrounds. The attractions that celebrate Barbados' heritage in terms of colonialism do not paint it in a particularly negative or oppressive way, because (as I speculate) many British visitors' ancestors were the oppressors. But furthermore, Barbados is known for having the least ugly history of slavery, so the reduction of oppression demonstrated needn't be thought of as a complete cover-up. Other more contemporary cultural

attractions are the widely popular Atlantis Submarine, the Garrison Savannah, Kensington Oval, and the Mount Gay Rum distillery (all located in Saint Michael).

For nightlife, most tourists are directed to St. Lawrence Gap in Christ Church. It is one strip where American and European-influenced bars line either side of the street. They serve Western influenced food and play Top 40 hits.

There are only a few places where locals and tourists venture to share the same experience. The club Harbour Lights (Saint Michael) draws a crowd of both young locals and tourists. Moon Town (Saint Lucy) has a strong karaoke scene that brings Bajans and tourists together. And the very popular Friday night Oistins (Christ Church) fish fry on the beach is a local tradition that tourists have come to regularly enjoy, too.

Additionally, tourists enjoy shopping (mostly in Holetown or Bridgetown), water sports, and guided cruises and boat trips. Surveys acknowledge Europeans as the majority visitors of the nature and heritage attractions while North Americans tend to stick to boat tours and water sports. (G. Gmelch, 2011, Chapter 1)

As a trend, most of the tourist attractions are in Saint Michael near Bridgetown or Christ Church along the South coast tourist belt. There are only a few inland attractions and they are mostly centered on plantation heritage or nature tourism. There are a few natural attractions that sprinkle the Northern coast, but in general, the tourists tend to stick to the two main tourist belts.

## **Government Goals and Initiatives**

The Ministry of Tourism pays close attention to their tourists – looking for trends to further develop their product and determine any problems – in order to maximize

tourist satisfaction and foreign expenditure. The Ministry uses this data to compare their tourism industry to those of their other Caribbean neighbors to make themselves look the most attractive. Moreover, the recent global recession has reminded Barbados exactly how fragile the tourism industry is, so they need to implement as many stabilizing initiatives as possible. Following their campaign slogan, “Encouraging Sustainable Tourism Development,” the Ministry is enabling numerous environmental protection campaigns, adding new tourist attractions, and making other efforts to decrease leakages.

Global warming is one of the biggest threats to Caribbean tourism. In Barbados, the majority of the population and its infrastructure reside along the coastline. With increasing water levels and heavier rainfall, the world class beaches are deteriorating. If this continues, tourists will be discouraged from vacationing there. To minimize their environmental impact, “Barbados has signed the Kyoto climate treaty and adopted measures to reduce its own use of fossil fuels, such as by increasing its use of solar and wind energy,” (G. Gmlech, 2011). Additionally, Barbados’ coral reefs are being harmed by fertilizers, pesticides, sewage, and other pollutants that are contaminating the runoff into the sea. As the coral dies and the reefs break down, beaches cannot regenerate themselves; an occurrence that Barbados cannot afford and must prevent. Tourists also consider reefs as something of value, so without them, Barbados would appear less attractive as a tourist destination. To reduce the reef degradation, government officials are enforcing on-site sewage treatment, they’re requiring beach-side development to be no less than 30 meters from the shore, and the Coastal Zone Management has recently implemented the Mooring Buoy Project to protect the reefs from the anchors of dive boats. Commercial boats are now required to connect to buoys rather than drop their

anchors wherever they please. Garbage and litter has also been a problem in Barbados, but there are recent campaigns to reduce litter and increase recycling. Despite the fact that tourists are the main contributors to Barbados' environmental degradation, without their presence, officials would unlikely be going to such measures to reduce their environmental impact.

As tourists stray from the "sun, sand, and sea" vacation, officials are trying to add more tourist attractions to feed their need for a richer cultural experience. Barbados doesn't have the terrain or ecology to push ecotourism, so instead they're placing their efforts in improving their heritage tourism. "The central government in 2010 submitted a formal application to UNESCO for 'Historic Bridgetown and its Garrison' to be inscribed on the 'World Heritage List,'" (G. Gmelch, 2011, Chapter 1). They're also looking to open more plantation houses for public viewing and currently doing the research for "Footsteps to Freedom: the Barbados Story", part of UNESCO's Slave Route Project that informs people of the history of the African diaspora and their migration to Barbados (Yearwood, 13 July 2010). Unlike Elmira Castle, a UNESCO site in Ghana that celebrates Africa's diaspora, Barbados' site plans on incorporating the visions and input from local Bajans to make the site something that locals will want to share with tourists and be proud of. Edward Bruner describes Elmira Castle as a site built by outsiders, for outsiders, where tourists use the tourist gaze to reflect their superiority on locals. Barbados is consciously avoiding such negative effects of an attraction based on colonialism and slavery. (Bruner, 2005)

Finally, government officials are taking action to decrease leakages in numerous ways. They're encouraging tourists to venture outside the walls of their resort, especially

around mealtimes. At all-inclusive hotels particularly (according to Colin Jordan, there are 10 on the island), guests are known to over-indulge in food and drinks and end up wasting most of what they order. It's getting too expensive for hotels to keep feeding them, so they're encouraging their guests to try local restaurants by heavily promoting them. Officials have also been adding very attractive deals for locals vacationing in Barbados ("staycations") to keep more Barbados dollars from leaving the country. Finally, more and more managerial and executive positions belong to Bajans, keeping more money invested in the local economy.

## **Conclusion**

Barbados is a world class tourist destination. And with the island's small size and dense population, tourism constantly touches the lives of all Bajans. On the one hand, tourism provides jobs, encourages environmental awareness, and requires advanced infrastructure. Conversely, tourists can be wasteful and over-indulgent, unknowingly contribute to environmental degradation, and, especially cruise-ship tourists, can get away with investing very little money into the local economy. As the major contributor to the island's GDP, tourism is Barbados' prized possession and officials are constantly working very hard to maintain a consistently strong industry to keep their land and its people happy.



## CHAPTER 2

### **Interactions between Hosts and Guests: Bartenders' Experiences Working in the Tourism Industry**

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the raw, unaltered words of some of Barbados' bartenders to delve into their conscious feelings about tourists and tourism in their country. The voice of the local people is an aspect of tourism literature that I found to be severely lacking. I want to take this chapter to devote to my informants and their precious words and opinions about tourism in Barbados and their personal interactions with tourists. This aspect of my research is essential for avoiding an outlook of false consciousness; the words of the local people are valuable and should be regarded as true, in contrast to assumptions that the people are unaware or uneducated. The chapter is not an analysis of their responses, but rather close transcriptions of my formal and informal interviews. The following chapter will serve the purpose of analyzing and making connections between their words and the Bajan culture that I, as an outsider, experienced.

I will use italics to differentiate between my words and the words of my informants (direct quotes from the informants being italicized). In this way I will indicate which interviews were formal and which ones were informal, the informal responses being translated to my best ability from my field notes. The interview questions are clustered by general topic because not every interview followed the same format or exact set of questions. They differed depending on the flow of conversation and whether I felt that we had developed enough trust and comfort to discuss such issues, especially since I embody the white, Western tourist that I ask about, which could potentially be uncomfortable for both of us.

Prior to delving right into my interview questions and my informants' responses, it is important to get a feel for the setting in which the interview took place and what kind of person I gathered the informants to be. This information is very important because, as you will see, there is an array in the content of responses, largely due to the location and kind of bar in which they work (West vs. South coast, all-inclusive vs. not all-inclusive, etc.). It is also important to note such things as the time of day, whether the bar was busy, who was around, and if the bartender was on duty, because those details could dictate the level of detail in which they responded. In order to set the scene for each interview, I will introduce each bartender in regard to such details. Most importantly, it should be known that not all informants are equally valuable informants. Some were much more willing to open up, some were more articulate, and some were more enthusiastic about answering questions than others.

## **The Bartenders**

### **Anthony: Gerry's Bar (Bridgetown, St. Michael)**

Gerry's Bar is a second-floor restaurant/bar in Bridgetown. There's not too much nightlife in Bridgetown since it's not particularly close to any nice beaches, but the people who spend significant amounts of time there tend to be mostly cruise ship tourists. I wandered into Gerry's because it was early enough in the day that I figured any bartender working wouldn't be busy and they might be able to let me informally interview them. Anthony was working alone and there were no customers in the restaurant/bar. He was very welcoming, friendly, and casual. He was more than happy to answer my questions, although he seemed to have his own agenda upon answering them.

He rarely got through a concise answer before going off on a tangent that usually ended in an unrelated philosophical life-lesson.

**Bradley: The Jazz Lounge (Holetown, St. James)**

The Jazz Lounge is located in Holetown, St. James in the most upscale section of the West coast. The Jazz Lounge is not affiliated with any resort although it is located right next to a major one. I wandered into The Jazz Lounge because I had some time before a meeting nearby. Fortunately for me, Bradley was working the bar alone and no one had come into the lounge yet for dinner, so he had no problem chatting with me and answering a few questions for my thesis. Bradley was older and had a lot of experience as a bartender. He was somewhat sedate and didn't go into great detail about any one question, although it was clear that he spoke with sincerity and experience. Even though he wasn't the most outgoing and talkative informant, it became clear he enjoyed conversing with me because he offered me a drink and invited me to come back after my meeting to continue talking if I wanted.

**Carlton: Crystal Water Resort and Spa (Holetown, St. James)**

Crystal Water Resort and Spa is an all-inclusive resort located in Holetown, St. James. The first time I met Carlton was at Crystal Water by spontaneously walking by and striking up conversation while he was working at the outdoor poolside bar. I introduced my thesis topic to him and we chatted for a long time about my thesis and other things. Guests were coming and going, so he was routinely preparing and serving them drinks. There was also one man who stayed seated at the bar, sometimes interjecting in our conversation. Carlton seemed to know all of the guests and what they were drinking. He had a way to make everyone feel involved in the conversation; me, Chelsea,

the man sitting at the bar, any guest who approached the counter, and even any staff member that walked by. Carlton was *very* talkative. One close-ended question would often evolve into a 10-minute response. Carlton was sincere, kind, and very philosophical. Our conversation at Crystal Water was helpful to me, but he offered to meet me another time when he wasn't working so we could continue our conversation and talk about some of the more sensitive issues.

The second time we met was in Bridgetown where he allowed me to formally interview him with my tape-recorder. We met at a Chefette (a Bajan fast-food restaurant). I bought us both rotis (a burrito-like Bajan dish) and we sat upstairs where I interviewed him. He was very helpful and insightful, even on such controversial issues as race and neocolonialism. However, midway through our interview, his 15-year old daughter came and joined us. We were in the midst of talking about some of these more serious issues, which made things a bit uncomfortable. However, Carlton remained honest and didn't seem to hold anything back. Overall, Carlton was one of my best informants for being able to speak about sensitive issues and answer all of my questions thoughtfully. He was soft-spoken, kind, and moral.

It will be possible to differentiate between his responses from our first (informal) and second (formal) meetings with the use of italics. The italics will indicate his exact, verbatim words.

### **Corinne: Making Waves (St. Lawrence Gap, Christ Church)**

Making Waves is one of the many tourist bars in St. Lawrence Gap. St. Lawrence Gap is known as the touristiest spot in the island. It's a strip located on the South coast,

where the hotels are cheaper and generally draw a much younger and rowdier crowd. The bars in The Gap generally play popular American music and serve American food.

I wandered into Making Waves one afternoon in hopes to catch a bartender who wasn't serving any guests yet. Corinne was working alone behind the bar, but there were numerous other workers preparing for the night's dinner shift and bar crowd. Since there were no customers, Corinne agreed to let me formally interview her. Corinne was a young woman, only a few years older than me. Already, because of this similarity, she was open with me from the start. She was very interested in my research and was extremely helpful. She provided a different perspective and different stories than the bartenders who worked at resorts, largely because she was in a place more known for partying. It was easy to talk to her about race issues, and she even called over another staff member who worked as a bartender to help share a race-related story which he was more than willing to do. Corinne was a very good informant who was honest, friendly, articulate, and easy to talk to.

### **Glen: One the Shore Residential Resort (St. Philip)**

One the Shore is one of Barbados' most famous resorts. Unlike the other upscale resorts that are located on the West coast, On the Shore is located in the off-the-beaten-track southeastern area of St. Philip. It's an extremely expansive resort. Some of the rooms are reserved as regular accommodations for tourists, while others are bought as residential property to foreigners.

I called ahead to schedule a formal interview with Glen, the manager of all four bars at On the Shore. I interviewed Glen at a patio table at one of the bars around noontime. It was a beautiful day and most guests were at the beach, so the bar was empty.

Glen was extremely nice, friendly, and articulate. Halfway through the interview, Kenny, one of Glen's top bartenders, walked by and Glen called him over to sit in on the interview and help answer my questions. It was nice having them answer questions together and watch them interact. They had a very friendly and respectful relationship. They seemed to know each other very well and were very comfortable with each other, even though Glen was Kenny's superior. After I finished asking them questions, they gave us a tour of the property. We stopped in their sports bar which, ironically for my thesis, used to be the slaves' home on the former plantation property. (On the Shore used to be a plantation and the owners turned it into an 18-room hotel in 1887. The former horse stable now has a pool inside. This is next to the former slave home turned sports bar.) Glen and Kenny were great informants. They were honest and insightful and worked well off of each other.

**Jade: Winedown (Bridgetown, St. Michael)**

Winedown is located in Bridgetown, so it is mostly visited by cruise ship tourists coming through for lunch. At first Jade wouldn't admit that Winedown was a tourist bar but the menu and décor implied otherwise, at least for the crowd it was *trying* to attract. (I speculate that Jade wouldn't consider it a tourist bar because in actuality, just as many locals ate and drank there as tourists.) It was located upstairs from a gift shop, the bar was covered with advertisements for foreign liquor and holidays, there were American, Canadian, and British flags hanging, and they explicitly said "authentic Bajan..." in front of many of their menu items. I informally asked her a few questions while we watched a World Cup soccer match. She provided some useful information, but she wasn't terribly talkative and she was clearly distracted by the television.

**Jonathan: Turtle Bay (Speightstown, St. Peter)**

Turtle Bay is a small resort located in Speightstown, the next major town behind Bridgetown and Holetown, on the West coast. Turtle Bay attracts mostly an older crowd and during certain times of the year, even prohibits children. It's a quiet atmosphere where the rooms don't even have television sets. I called Turtle Bay ahead of time and made an appointment to formally interview Jonathan, one of their bartenders. Jonathan is a young, experienced, and well-traveled man. I interviewed him in a private room where he willingly answered my questions. He was a quiet-mannered man who was happy to talk to me, but didn't elaborate on his responses like many of the other informants.

**Melvin: Low Tide Spa and Resort (Holetown, St. James)**

Low Tide Spa and Resort is located in Holetown. It is yet another resort that litters the West coast in the most expensive part of the island. Low Tide is a fairly quiet, but elegant, resort. When I arrived in the early afternoon, guests were reading in the lounge chairs and relaxing in the pool. There were only two people sitting at the bar when I was talking to Melvin, but a few more people were seated in the chairs nearby. I arrived unannounced in hopes that I would be able to talk to a bartender if they weren't busy. A manager introduced me to Melvin who allowed me to (informally) ask him a few questions. He was quiet and not very talkative. What he said was valuable, but the conversation didn't last long.

**Paul: Sunset Bay (Holetown, St. James)**

Sunset Bay Resort is also located in Holetown. It's a fairly quiet but elegant resort that caters to mostly couples, both young and old. I arranged to meet with Paul, the restaurant and bar manager, around dinnertime to formally interview him. The bar was

beautifully lit up and many guests were outside mingling with each other and casually drinking. They were dressed up, seeing as they were having a cocktail party for the guests. Paul later explained to me that the restaurant puts on a cocktail dinner party every Wednesday night (they make announcements, acknowledge repeat guests, honeymooners, etc.), but this one was special. They had shut down the kitchen, restaurant, and bar for an entire day for a deep cleaning. This was an inconvenience to the guests because the bar had to be moved and they had to do picnic lunches and dinners. In the restaurant's effort to make up for that inconvenience, they put on a special cocktail party with a model doing a fashion show, a dancer, a steel pan player, and a few different vendors selling local crafts. There were a few families, but the guests were predominantly couples. One couple was talking and joking a lot with a bartender. The guests appeared to be mingling with each other more than they were talking to the staff. Paul made a number of announcements to the guests over a microphone and he made sure to introduce the entire wait-staff and bar-staff by name.

Paul was an excellent informant. He was welcoming and kind and was extremely attentive to me, even though it was clearly a busy night for him. His answers were thoughtful and thorough and we established a trustworthy relationship so he could speak freely about the more sensitive issues of the discourse.

**Tom: Pirate's Cove (St. Lawrence Gap, Christ Church)**

Pirate's Cove is located in St. Lawrence Gap and I had been advised to go there, seeing as it was one of the main tourist bars on the island. I ventured to the Pirate's Cove on a Friday night, hoping to see some of the bars in The Gap in action. When I approached the bar, there was a group of people surrounding the table where one pays



their cover charge (BDS \$10). The group was a mix of locals and both male and female British tourists. One British man was jokingly working with the staff at their table carding the customers and collecting money for the staff who seemed only somewhat amused. Once inside, the bar area was fairly dead. The music was loud, a mix of American songs re-mixed with dub-style music, and the lights were dim. I watched Tom tend to the few customers. He was very quick at preparing and serving drinks and he always remembered everyone's drink orders. I asked him if we could have an informal interview so he found someone to quickly cover for him while we talked for a few minutes. He was preoccupied so his responses were brief, but significant.

## **The Responses**

### ***What it Means to be a Bartender***

With this set of questions, I was hoping to 1) warm the informants up by talking about themselves and their experiences and 2) uncover their perceptions of what their job is. In order to understand the role of tourism in Barbados, it is necessary to understand how the workers perceive their role in the industry. Are they solely servers to the guests? Are they benefiting from their job? How do they see their contribution to the overall quality of the tourists' vacation? The workers' role and self perception is very important in this ethnography. They are indicative of the local feelings toward their guests and their island's response to globalization and the tourism industry.

### **How did you get into bartending? What do you like about it?**

**Anthony:** I enjoy being a bartender because I like talking to everyone and anyone. I see people of all different nationalities and I like serving and talking to all of them. I've met

some interesting people. I've gone on dates with a lot of women I've met here. I can't complain! I also have a passion for alcohol itself. I enjoy mixing different drinks and experimenting with different tastes.

**Corinne:** *I like it very much. I like mixing drinks. I think I'm good at it. And I like working here specifically because you never know who's going to come in. I like talking to people from all over the world and I like watching them have a good time. I don't need to engage in a deep conversation with them to feel like I'm contributing to their vacation. I'm happy to just give them a good cocktail if it's a loud night and they'd rather dance and sing than sit and chat with me. I also like the tourists because sometimes they take away from more Bajans coming in. That sounds bad but Bajans aren't the best to serve.*

**Jade:** I started bartending just because it was something to do. But I actually really like it! Many tourists, if they choose to take the time, are curious and ask about Barbados and our culture here; what we do and places to go. I like this a lot and like talking to them about where I'm from and their countries. I've never really traveled before but I like the idea and like learning about them. I also like making drinks. It's fun for me.

**Melvin:** I began working as a barman in a restaurant in the '80s and then moved to Low Tide, the only hotel I've ever worked at. I wanted to work in the tourism industry because it was booming and it seemed like the logical and only thing to do. I had the opportunity to leave Low Tide a few years ago, but I decided against it. I thought, why change? I'm not young anymore. There's no point in looking for something else. I enjoy working at the bar and talking to foreigners. I like talking about Barbados and guests like to ask me those kinds of questions. But because this is a hotel, people have already paid to use the

different facilities so they don't want to spend all of their time sitting and talking to me. They want to do other things so I don't usually have long conversations with them.

**What does it mean to be a good bartender? What types of skills do they need?**

**Carlton:** *The first rule of bartending is to be friendly because when you operate on that level, you're able to produce and provide a better service because you want that same thing coming over to you when you're on the other side. The other thing is that sometimes we lose sight of being in a hospitality industry because as you said earlier, if alcohol impacts the brain and their reality, we see different sides to people and what they're really all about. However I believe a good bartender is always able to assess a situation, even before it happens. You have to know when you approach a guest if you should converse with them or just provide a service and move on. That's my take on it. However, in my years I've found that alcohol kind of loosens the brain and it helps most people who would generally not talk to you talk to you. It doesn't mean the next morning they will talk to you. I've seen this. But working behind the bar has taught me to be vigilant. It's not about providing a good cocktail or a good rum and Coke. It's about providing a service that others can feel comfortable. Because if I serve you and don't serve you with a smile, that drink is not going to go down as nice as it would if I gave you a comforting word, like 'how is your day?' even before I serve you... Mix it up with some laughter and enthusiasm. We call it the Smile Program... This is the most important part about providing a very good service. Correct dosage... The first thing you have to ask is if they want something sweet, sour, or a balance. Work that way, and you'll keep on. If you're looking at the administrative level of the bar, it's different. It's because if you're*

*dealing with places that you pay as you go, you have to monitor your output. But the all-inclusive, you have to study the heads of the people. That's something you're going to have to learn, Pearl. Because if you have guests that are drinking at a proportional rate, what are you going to do as a hotel? You have to offer specials and things that will slow them down. If you don't slow them down, what is going to happen to you? You're operating at a bar cost, whether it be \$6 bar costs, \$7 bar costs, \$8 bar costs, or \$12 bar costs. If the input exceeds your \$12, how are you going to make it back?... You're going to surpass your amount. How are you going to factor that into your next drink? How do you do it? Bartenders. This is where bartenders start to show their skill. You're there to make the guests happy, but you're also there to protect the interest of the owners. When a bartender is being asked these questions, I need to be careful because I think that many people think bartenders are pretty dumb. But we are the psychologists of alcohol. We have to sit and listen if you are having a bad day with your boyfriend, to you having a bad day with your husband, they're having a bad day with their wife, and you still have to monitor how much you give to them because you don't want them to get hurt. As soon as you see a customer stumble, you should cut off their drinks. But how can you tell a man who paid, lets say, over 2,000 pounds to come stay at your hotel that you can't give him a drink because you feel in your heart that he's drunk. And the first thing he's going to ask you is, 'are you a medical doctor?' What are you going to tell them? These are things that we're faced with daily and it's not easy. You have to pace some of your guests, and there are some not-so-sincere guests. What can you do? You can only learn from your mistakes, your challenges, and be able to do things that other people in the*

*room cannot do... But first and foremost, you are there to please the guest. My thing is that this is a hospitality industry. If you can't be nice, get out of here. That's my thing.*

**Glen:** *We look for a person in the bar with a nice personality, smile, not an aggressive-looking look, but friendly, and more proactive pertaining to bartending and off the floor service, especially cross-training. We look for presentation in the body. We look for mannerism and personality first. For instance, we could have a good worker who has a negative approach, and that would be bad. We need that combination between good worker, nice personality, friendly smile, and a welcoming demeanor.*

**Paul:** *Basically, I handpick our bartenders... Sometimes it's not all about looking at your hobbies or the actual length of time that you've worked. It may be something very small, like a skill that you might have that I'll recognize, like attention to detail, interaction, small things like that. You can go to the best college and go through the best training and you might be able to make a good cocktail. But the way you interact with clients is also important. So those are things that I look at as well as the educational sector, and I don't discard education. But I look at the actual interaction, how you carry yourself, your whole. There are some people who walk into a room and you can recognize they're here. And now, I have a good set of guys in the bar. But often I can tell who's working the bar just by the crowd, the way they interact. We have the bar balance in terms of age. I have guys in the bar who are 20, 21 who interact very well with young clientele. And then we have guys in the bar who are in their first fifties which gives the balance to older clientele as well. We keep that combination because the conversation that the younger clientele would have with a younger bartender is much different conversation than with a senior bartender. Because when it comes to partying, younger bartenders are more in sync with*

*the younger clientele, especially in the summer. They can tell kids where to go party. With older bartenders, what I find is that having looked at them and watching them work with the older clientele, they are more inclined to talk about the way the island has transformed and transformation of the island's topical history because the older clientele are people who have been coming to the island for numerous years and are probably familiar with the bartender. They talk about the transformation of the island, the infrastructure that's been put in place.*

**What do you think of the notion that bartenders are also psychologists/philosophers?**

**Carlton:** Well there's a reason they call me Dr. Carlton. It's part of the job. *After a few rum and Cokes, they'll talk to you about almost anything. I find that women are more out to speak about their emotional trainwrecks. Men are more up to talking about football or whatever. Men are very careful about what they're saying. But after he drinks a good amount of alcohol, you will easily see that men will talk more when he's in the presence of women than if it was just us, because his aim is to conquer all and to impress. Women, on the other hand, don't have to do nothing like that. They just talk because they need to vent. When their emotions are running high, they need to get them back down. As a bartender, you need to be able to read the situation in terms of what to say, how much alcohol they should be consuming, if their drinks should be more or less alcoholic, and things like that. It's difficult and that's a skill that cannot be taught. So in that sense, the name Dr. Carlton rings true for how I choose to relate to my guests.*

**Corinne:** *I don't really think of myself that way. Tourists are always in a good mood, they don't have much to complain about I don't think. At least not to me. Also, they always come with friends or spouse or a boyfriend or girlfriend or something. So they're always taken care of. You know, why would they feel like they should come spill all of their feelings to me when their friends are right there? It doesn't really happen at this kind of place. Maybe hotels, I don't know.*

**What do you usually talk about with guests?**

**Bradley:** For the most part, I enjoy serving visitors and conversing with them. I like to talk about sports and politics and I've traveled a lot so I feel like he can relate to many things they have to say. Mostly I talk to men. They're the ones that come by themselves and sit at the bar. And we're more interested in sharing stories of where we're from, less about feelings and things like that.

**Corinne:** *Tourists are always so happy and bubbly. They're talkative and they have a lot of questions. They want to know about things to do, places to go, you know. They have nothing to worry about, no real time schedule. They're just here to have a good time. They're fun usually. I definitely talk to tourists much more than locals. Locals keep to themselves.*

**Jonathan:** *Here, a lot of people like to talk about sports. We talk about sports a lot. People will come and ask about the island. People will ask, what's a good place to eat at tonight? What are some places on the island that we should see while we're here? Things like that. People will ask about me too. Like where I live on the island. Many people will ask if I'm married. On this island, people tend to get married older than most places.*

*People get married when they're in their forties. Seldom do people get married in the twenties. I'm not saying it won't happen, but seldom. People who come and sit at the bar are the people that want to come and interact. If people come and sit away at the tables, they're the quieter types, at least to me. The people that like to interact with you are the ones that will come sit at the bar and start a conversation... You get to know them by name and what time of the year they're coming. I've never been to visit a guest, but I've had offers before. Guests who come here are very friendly. Here's a story. I got married last September. Probably the taxi driver who brought them told them, so they came running in to me saying "Ooh Jonathan, you got married! You have to bring in your pictures and show us!" Then they brought me a gift. Nice people. I knew them from years back. They're repeat guests.*

### ***Dynamics and Differences between Tourists and Locals***

This cluster of questions aims to uncover some of the host/guest relations that the bartenders experience themselves or observe at their bars. In order to understand the place of tourism in Bajan culture, it seems key to understand the interactions that occur between locals and tourists. Such interactions include anything from dating/sexual relations between tourists and locals to stereotypes of different nationalities. In the course of these questions, I unexpectedly discovered a trend, in that many bartenders voluntarily raised the issue of the difference between serving tourists and serving other locals. This brought forth a very interesting set of responses.



**Do you see many instances of female guests dating local men, or vice versa?**

**Anthony:** Well I often go on dates with women I meet here. I actually prefer white women. I don't *look* to ask out women, but if conversation is going well and I think she's a nice girl that I'd like to meet again, I'll ask her out. I see the bar as just another setting where you meet people. I don't see any reason why I shouldn't date women that come in here that I serve. And I see other Bajans dating tourists. We're all equal here. Why not spend more time with people you meet and find interesting? We all have a lot to learn from each other.

**Corinne:** *Both. I see it all, really. Black men and white women, white men and black women. A lot of times actually the white tourist guys are getting with local prostitutes. It probably wouldn't be obvious to you if you were to go out here, but we can always tell. It's how they talk to each other and interact. I can never believe it though, how much prettier the women are than the guys. It's like, what are you doing with them? I think with the female tourists, she's looking for a real local, and she thinks that means a Rasta-looking guy, a guy with dreadlocks, and usually he's so gross compared to her! It's funny watching strangers get together. They [tourists] just think they should get with whoever when they're on vacation. Who can blame them? It's entertaining for me, though!... You'll see people kissing on the dance floor a bit, but nothing more than that. They will leave together though. It's usually on the tourist's last night. I think they probably have the mentality of 'this is my last night, no one will know, and I need to do this before I leave.' A lot of times they'll tell me that's what they're doing, or hoping for, or their friends will tell me when they're drunk. I overhear a lot about this stuff. It's funny.*

### **How does serving a tourist differ from serving a local?**

**Bradley:** Visitors are more interesting to talk to than Bajans. Bajans can be difficult. They're always late for reservations, sometimes they don't show up, and they can be rude. Visitors are always in a good mood.

**Corinne:** *Bajans are definitely the people that get the most under our skin when we're serving them... They're just demanding, but in almost self-demeaning ways. Like this one time, a Bajan family came here for dinner. I went to seat them on the patio where all of the other customers were. All of the customers happened to be white guests, but I didn't think anything of it. I just figured, you're all dining out at the same place. Why should I treat anyone differently? Anyway, the Bajans got all weird about sitting in the same place as the tourists so they instead made me seat them in the back, dark, secluded, corner table. It was so annoying! Then they got mad that we weren't as attentive to their table. But how could we be? 95 percent of the other customers were on the patio. It's almost self-inflicted back-of-the-bus stuff. I don't know why they're like that. They're just so difficult... But locals are always nice to tourists because they want them to come back. I think they're aware that Barbados is viewed as having the nicest people and they know that it's obviously good for our economy if tourists experience that friendliness. So yes, they will be nice to them. And I think it is natural. We kind of grow up that way. But I would say that Bajans are pretty conservative. And at least in places like this, they come with each other and only talk to each other. In that sense, they can come off as rude. I don't want to put Bajans down. It seems like you've been having a good experience so far and I think that your interactions have been genuine. But I guess in this business at least, the horror stories are true, and there are quite a few of them.*

**Are there stereotypes attached to the different nationalities of your guests?**

**Bradley:** Americans are probably the best tippers. The British are thought of as a bit snobby and they're the majority of Barbados' tourist. Bajans are the worst customers in every way possible. I would much rather serve a visitor than a local. Bajans are always late to their reservations, they never try anything new, they just get the same things they could get anywhere else, and they're not friendly to the staff.

**Corinne:** *Well Canadians are definitely the best tippers. Definitely. Americans are pretty good too. I think the English get the worst reputation, I guess for being most rude. But I don't know if that's a fair assessment because there's also the most of them. But in my experiences they've been the rudest, and probably most racist. Not always blatantly, but you can feel it most with them.*

**Glen:** *Canadians, Americans, Italians, they're nice people. I find that with Americans you have to go the extra mile because they know what service is, I think. So they expect a lot. And if they're paying for something, they expect it. The English and Canadians, you can patch it up if you don't have it. You can ask 'sorry, but would you like something else?' If an American asks for a glass of water, it's a glass of water they want. Canadians, Americans, Italians, you can compromise with all of them. But to me, Americans know what they want. If they want a vodka and tonic with Smirnoff, but there's no more Smirnoff, they won't take Grey Goose. Other nationalities will accept what we have. To me, Americans are very strict when it comes to service.*

## ***Tourist Behavior***

With this set of questions, I hoped to uncover typical tourist behavior in the bar, particularly their drinking habits. Drunkenness alters the way one would typically behave which, as the literature would argue, might result in rude and disrespectful behavior. The literature states that tourists feel so entitled that cultural norms do not apply to them, so their “ignorant” behavior can consequently be offensive. I wanted to uncover the truth behind this statement and the bartender’s perceptions of tourist behavior. Different crowds are drawn to different parts of the island, so I was interested to understand how each bartender’s experiences differed.

### **What is typical tourist behavior in your bar?**

**Jade:** They tend to try the local cuisine and alcohol while locals tend to eat more burgers and foreign-influenced foods. A lot of times they will come in the bar in only a bathing suit which is against the bar’s policy and against our norms here in Barbados. I think they feel that they have the right to act however they want because they’re tourists. Driving the wrong way down a one-way street is another example of this. I don’t ever take it personally. I just find it irritating when I need to ask them to cover up and they seem bothered by it. But usually they don’t mind so it’s not a big deal.

**Tom:** When most tourists come, they come for sit-down dinners. So they’re usually here for a while. They’ll eat, drink, and drink some more. They like to have a good time. They’ll get a bit drunk, but never excessively. I’ve never had to deal with much drunkenness. They get talkative too.

**Do you deal with a lot of drunkenness? How do you deal with it?**

**Bradley:** People rarely get drunk to the point where I need to intervene or their behavior becomes obnoxious. I expect visitors to drink, so I try hard to make them a good cocktail and deliver it with a smile. But nothing ever gets out of hand.

**Corinne:** *Most people that come in drink, and drink a lot. Most people don't get completely smashed, but occasionally they do. It's not really our problem though. Most people come with their friends so if they get too drunk and pass out, which has happened a few times, their friends will take care of them. So if they want to get that drunk, I let them. It's their choice. I'll call them a cab if they need it, but usually their friends do it. We don't have a policy on what to do if someone gets too drunk. I think all of the bartenders handle it differently, but I never really feel like I need to cut anyone off. It's actually quite funny, watching all the drunk people. They're always dancing and singing and yelling. It's the best when they try to get with other people, which I see all the time. It's pretty funny.*

**Glen:** *People drink a lot, but they don't get really drunk. Like couples, usually it's the lady getting drunk and the partner intervenes or vice versa... We have some guests that really just come to free up themselves. But you don't get drunk because we have a cutoff limit. If we see you getting on or drinking too much we cut you off and if you're causing problems we call security. We want to serve you but we also don't want you to hurt yourself, so we cut you off at a certain limit. That rarely happens though, maybe 4 or 5 persons in a year. During World Cup football there were many more. You'll see people starting to yell and curse and use bad language. It doesn't offend us as much as it might offend other customers. We're here to please everyone so we have to cut them off because*

*they're offending other customers at On the Shore... But alcohol certainly relaxes some people. It makes people, when they drink alcohol, more free and outspoken. They'll talk about things that they don't talk about normally. It frees the spirit so you can confess. When you have a little more alcohol, you speak more freely about what the problem really is. So that's where the bartender comes in, to see how we can solve it or see if you can make the person feel more comfortable and relaxed in that situation.*

**Melvin:** No one gets really drunk here. It's not that kind of place. Some people will consistently drink all day, but they don't get drunk.

**Paul:** *Like any other bar, people get drunk. We want them to be safe. As I tell all my bartenders, at the end of the day we want all of our bartenders and guests to be safe. So we can stop them if we think they need to. It doesn't go over well... But that rarely happens. Very rarely.*

**Do tourists behave differently than they might at home? Is that ever offensive?**

**Carlton:** *The thing about that is that when they're away from home they let their inner kitty come out, or inner demons. You as an individual are responsible for your own actions. You have to be able to produce some type of moral standard that you're able to live by. So when you come to Barbados or any other Caribbean country or any country for that matter, and you're away from home, you want to try things! It could be right or wrong, but who goes away and doesn't want to try things? Visitors can only be visitors. They're not residents. When you're in another man's country, why not? You know that as soon as you're back home you can't risk it. So if you can get away with things in Barbados, why not? But if I'm caught however, that is where it stops. My thing is that*

*when you're on vacation, be careful. But hey, if you can get away with something, why not? It's all about living and taking risks... What goes around comes around! If I can go to Canada or America and take to the bottle, another man comes here and does the same thing! And that's ok. Everyone is guilty on some level. You cannot have all good people in the world. We tried and it did not work. Adam and Eve still went to the bad side.*

**Corinne:** No. Usually they're just funny. Everyone [Bajans] expects them to drink and get drunk. They're on vacation. They don't have anything better to do. Why wouldn't they? And it's generally pretty harmless. Usually the worst that happens is that they'll wake up with a hangover. They often buy me drinks, too, which I obviously appreciate. But no, I expect them to get drunk and be loud and such like. That's normal for tourists.

**Jonathan:** *I think it's normal for people to say that they can drink and do whatever because they're in a strange place, the people don't know them, and they'll never see them again. I know I have friends who say that all the time. People don't really care how they act. But even so, because the guests are older, we don't get much of that. We get a lot of really wealthy people here. Most of them are nice to deal with. Occasionally you'll get someone who's demanding. But that's part of the job. I don't really find rude people here. If they complain, it's usually over service. They don't like to wait. When they want something, they want someone to be there. But they pay so much money to come here, so they expect the best. We have mostly Europeans here and those flights are not cheap. It's completely fair. At this time now, the rates have dropped. People save up all year round to come, so they expect the best. But people are never rude. If they have a problem, they might not say anything to you. They'll say it to the manager who will then come to you.*

*They're not rude to you, though. It's probably worse to have the manager come, though (laughs). Then you're in trouble.*

**Paul:** *There are some guests who really don't turn off. They come on holiday but they don't leave their arrogance at home. Sometimes you do see rudeness. But we haven't had any major issues with that. As you can see we try to keep our guests as bubbly and happy as possible. If we see there's an issue, someone will quietly and discretely pull them aside to talk to them and not embarrass them. We'll let them know that as a customer, as our guest, this is what we expect from you and in return, my bartenders and any of my service staff will provide the service that you paid for, that you deserve... People want to experience everything. They want to go wild. We get some people that are very subdued, relaxed, and low key. And we will get a crowd that is rowdy. It depends on where you come from as well and the circumstance. Take soccer, for example. If we had soccer on, we would draw different crowds. You'd get some backing their team and they're sad because they're not winning. And then you have the upbeat crowd so they clash a bit. But we haven't had many challenges with this. People do act different, but it's not much of a concern... But if I come to your home, I should respect your home. And in turn I believe the same. If you come to my home, you show me respect. So it's the same. I work here. People should respect the staff and the property. People shouldn't be obnoxious, or drink themselves crazy. I do have to speak to some people in reference to the way they treat people and the property. And when you leave, we have to clean up after you. It's the business we're in. It's a service oriented business. We have to keep people happy. We have to maintain that balance.*



## ***Race and Power Issues***

This set of questions was the hardest to ask because 1) racism is a touchy subject and 2) the questions were coming from me; a young, white, American woman. I wasn't expecting many long and detailed responses and I only asked the informants that I had had the most comfortable conversations with. These questions get at the heart of the tourism discourse and are central to my analysis of tourism's role in Bajan culture. Some of the answers are more thoughtful than others, given the nature of the questions.

### **Do you think that any disrespect that you experience is race related?**

**Corinne:** *Sometimes. It's not always obvious though. And I don't even know if I can describe what it's like. You just feel it. It's in the way they talk to you and their tone. You can feel their superiority. I think it's stupid. Why would they come to Barbados, a black country, if they have a problem with black people?* (Another bartender walked by. She asked him, "Hey, do you ever deal with racism when you're working?" He responded:) *Not a lot. Sometimes. My worst experience by far was with a white Bajan. He came in here and had been drinking a lot. He just carried this way about him. I didn't like him, but I wasn't going to show it. Anyway, he got drunk, got mouthy, and called me a nigger. I was like, ok you've got to be kidding me. I kicked him out, I told my manager, and now he's not allowed back in here. I don't think he'd come back anyway. He made an ass out of himself. We don't want his business. But white Bajans definitely are the worst in terms of racial tension. Bajans in general are definitely the worst people to deal with.* (He left and Corinne continued:) *I would say that more racism occurs within the work place actually. One time here a white foreign person was hired as a bartender, and then there were all these issues because people were mad that a busboy didn't get promoted. People*

*thought that the white person got the better job just because they were white. It was stupid, really. But I do think that there are conflicts when black and white people work side by side. In terms of the everyday customers, it's not a huge deal. Sometimes people are rude, usually they're fine. And when they are, we're all mature enough to deal with it.*

**Paul:** *I don't think it's necessarily race related. But racism is still around. Some people still carry the stigma and they think they can walk around and say 'hey boy, come here' or whatever. I think it has a lot to do with the person on the receiving end. If you answer to it, you're contributing to the problem. If you ignore it, you'll get the message across that that's not how to talk to people. Me personally, I ignore it. We've passed that years and years ago. But there are some people that think, we'll I'm on holiday which I've paid for so I've automatically paid for you to serve me. No. You paid for holiday. We're here to ensure that you have a good time here, to ensure that you don't get yourself in trouble. We're here to serve your meals, but not to be a victim.*

**What do you think of the notion that tourism could be a form of neocolonialism?**

**Bradley:** *No, I would not put the two together. I've never felt particularly victimized. I do think that sometimes the British can have a chip on their shoulder, but I never let it bother me. If I was bothered by their attitudes, I wouldn't have remained a bartender for 42 years.*

**Carlton:** *We are servers to all, slaves to none. However, the tourism industry is a serving industry, but that doesn't mean it's a slave industry. Some people have made it into a slave industry. And I personally adopt that idea that tourism is a higher form of slavery. However, what I do not do is find myself believing that I'm a slave. However you look at*

*it, there's no job that does not having people that don't serve. We all work in service industries. What I think about the persons that used to enslave us and are now guests on our island, simple. I was not alive then. I do not carry that spirit with me. To me slavery is over. Yes, there is a higher and subtle form of slavery. Yes, there are slave tactics in a lot of things. But to me, it's still about providing a good service. It has nothing to do anymore with if you were my master. I believe in providing a good service. If I can do that and make a guest happy, even have them become my friend, because Barbados is one of the places in the world that they say we had polite slaves, and now they say that that's a reason people want to come here. We are very cultured. All I can tell you is that my people have always been people easy to get along with. If that makes us polite slaves, ok. But I have been to other places and I don't see them as polite slaves. I see them as actual human beings. If I go around telling myself that tourism is a higher form of slavery, I keep it with me. I said earlier that that's how I thought. But as the days go by and I meet nice people like yourself, I am convinced that we can do this thing. We can leave out the slavery and we can just look at it as a service where people just want to be treated nicely where back home they're not treated as nicely. When you come on vacation you can let down your hair. We can see tourism as a gift. Travel. We can go to another man's land and experience his culture. So then you're able to go tell your friends 'you should go to Barbados where people are nice. I met Carlton.' You spread the word around and it helps. A good word spoken is better than gold. Tourism for me, if managed properly, can survive throughout the years. If it doesn't, it will die a sad death.*

**Jonathan:** *I don't think of it that way. Not here, but in some places like Bermuda, a lot of people who work in tourism there are non-nationals because Bermudans don't like to*

*work in tourism for that reason. To be honest, in Barbados, working in tourism is not a bad paying job and you can make some good tips.*

**Do guests complain a lot? What do they complain about?**

**Carlton:** *I would say that 40% of their complaints are legitimate, the other 60 is bogus. They're scoundrels. There are guests that are scoundrels. They complain about things like their room; sometimes the air conditioning has broken down or the appliances don't work. They must understand that Barbados caters mostly to British guests and what happens is that you have to be on the ball. If it's rooms or appliances or reservations; guests do have legitimate concerns. The other ones are just looking for a free trip, but you can't kill them. People are human. They will make mistakes and provide some kind of trickery. That's where guest relations fail. You must be able to see these things. I blame management in Barbados. You must make sure that the product that you are selling is of the utmost and highest quality. If the guests have to complain, you can say 'these are our standards and we stick to them.'*

**Glen:** *(Kenny) I have a story. Tuesday night this guy came in and he bought some drinks for his family. They had two daughters, and they were both around 21 years old. The girls wanted piña coladas with the alcohol, but he said they can't have them. The girls said that they were 21 and should be able to have it. The guy said, with a lot of bad words in between, that they're to have the virgin piña colada. After they had their drinks they went from this bar to the other bar to get a mojito for his wife and all that kind of stuff. When the guy got the bill, only the Banks were on the happy hour. The guy, blasphemy, he cursed me a lot. He said he was going to complain for me because I didn't give him all*

*the drinks during happy hour but it's not my fault because only selected drinks are on the happy hour. (Glen) With happy hour, we have it Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday, and Sunday. You can get a gin and tonic, but you have to get the house gin. You cannot get Beefeater or Gordon's or Hendrick's during happy hour. We have some guests that don't know that but will still come to happy hour and expect to have those drinks for happy hour. Although Kenny was doing his job and he was right and he explained himself, the guy still wants to complain because he thinks he's entitled to it. We don't have whiskey on happy hour but still guests will come and ask for it. They can still get a whiskey and Coke, but not at the happy hour price. But it's not entitled for the happy hour. So people come with, I will say, tricks and because they are guests, sometimes they win because we're trained not to confront or have confrontation with the guests. Some people take advantage of the situation because they can use that the guests are always right. So you have to be very careful because you might be explaining yourself but some guests might think you're tricking them. The management usually sides with the guest because they want that business and for the guests to come back again. We have to be very aware of what we say and if we have a problem, go to the manager or call me and I will pass on the information to security or whatever. But some guests come looking for free-ness.*

*(Kenny) After that guy went to the front desk, I don't know who he complained to about the situation but I saw the food and beverage manager and I told him about the whole situation and he told me not to worry about it. He told the other bartender, Ian, and we're just hoping that all goes well from here. (Glen) Because what they'll do is go on tripadvising and write a bad comment and we try to avoid bad comments because every week they print out the comments we have and their names are on them. The management*

*shows the bartenders the good and the bad comments. We don't get many bad comments, but when we do we look at the closely to nip it in the butt so it doesn't escalate. Even if it's true or not, we still deal with it as a complaint. Even so, we need to go through the effort to try to get them to come back because we see them as customers. We will say Tom is coming back next week or next year or whatever but look out because this is what he does. So then when that customer comes back you have to be alert and professional because he'll come back with business but maybe still looking for those tricks. So it's a give and take situation.*

**Paul:** *Not really, no. Well looking at the comment cards, actually I was just going through a couple of them, my bartenders are actually the people that keep the restaurants afloat. So that's why we have that balance. During the summer, I change my bar schedule a bit. I have more of my younger guys around during peak times to interact with a younger clientele. I have 3 bartenders per shift. I'll have one middle aged bartender and 2 younger guys so I can maintain that balance at all times. And the comments that come back, they name the people that are most friendly, make great cocktails, and still have the balance. Maintaining it can become a bit challenging sometimes, but somehow I manage to do it.*

## **Conclusion**

The purpose of this chapter was to provide select excerpts from some of my informants' responses to my questions about their experiences working as a bartender and serving tourists. It is not meant to serve as an analysis of the tourism industry in Barbados. Chapter 3 will more closely examine the trends of these interviews and place

them back in the cultural setting of Barbados for a more thorough analysis of the influence of tourism on local culture.

## CHAPTER 3

### The Impact of Tourism on Local Bajan Culture

The purpose of this chapter is to distinguish the cultural impact of tourism on local Bajan culture. Thus far, we know the sociological, statistical, and environmental impacts, as well as the spoken words of bartenders that work in the industry, interact with, and serve visitors daily. Using a holistic ethnographical approach, this chapter ties together all aspects of Bajan culture in order to analyze the overall impact of the tourism industry. In order to achieve this, I will describe typical Bajan life and the complexities associated with it, using the island's geography as a framework. Saint Lucy, the parish in which I resided during my fieldwork experience, is the parish most far removed from the major tourist belts. Their lifestyle is most representative of rural village life and contrasts most with tourist areas and urban Bridgetown. This ethnography will begin in Saint Lucy and move down the West coast to get a feel for the different layers of Bajan culture in relation to their level of interaction with tourism and the First World. My information is drawn mostly from my own field notes, conversations, and experiences in Barbados shared with Chelsea, my fellow classmate. It is important to note that many of my experiences and insights came as a result of being perceived as a tourist myself. Those who didn't know me identified me as a tourist. Those who did know me and knew I was a student conducting research still saw me as a tourist because I was a white outsider. Although frustrating at times, this provided a unique perspective from which to study and analyze the impact of tourism on local culture, particularly in the realm of host/guest relations.



The section titled *Rural Bajan Society* is meant to describe mostly the lifestyle in Saint Lucy. While some Saint Lucy residents work in the tourism industry and elements of the First World (developments that are a result of the foreign exchange brought in by tourism) are extremely prevalent, the face to face presence of tourism is far less than most other regions of the country. Tourists rarely venture to Saint Lucy, the section of the island thought of as the most rural and most “country.” So relative to the tourist-dominated areas, tourists might consider it the most “authentic” or “backstage” as a one can get. The section covers mostly Bajans’ interactions with each other and their activities in their own private sphere away from the tourist-dominated areas.

The section titled *The Heart of the Tourist Scene* moves down the West coast to the heavily tourist-dominated areas. In contrast to life in Saint Lucy, this section is meant to describe the cultural exchanges and First World presence in Barbados in places where tourists heavily gather. This information also comes from my own field work, conversations with locals and tourists, and my own experiences being treated as a white American female tourist. The words of the bartenders that were introduced in Chapter 2 are embedded within these sections to represent the voice of the local people that earn their living by serving tourists.

Finally, the section titled *Social Gatherings without Tourists* moves all the way down to Bridgetown and Christ Church, some of the more densely populated areas by both tourists and Bajans. Here, I will describe some of the norms and customs of a few different types of social gatherings that are unpenetrated by tourists, even though they take place right under their noses. These are interesting because even though they’re mostly uninterrupted by tourists, many of my observations point to discrepancies between

some of the norms there and those that prevail in Saint Lucy, which is also largely uninterrupted by tourists.

Besides describing the impact of tourism on local culture, the purpose of this chapter is really to accentuate the point that there are not two layers of Bajan culture. There are no confined areas in which tourism is extremely prevalent and other areas where the effects of tourism are completely absent. Therefore, going back to the framework provided by the tourism scholars, the front and backstage don't neatly apply here. The concept of tourism relies on the idea that there is a level of more authentic culture that is behind the scenes and what the mainstream tourist is exposed to is largely staged authenticity. As Dean MacCannell (among other tourism scholars) argues, tourist destinations try to live up to the tourists' expectations by enhancing their "otherness" in the front stage. Some tourists accept this while others aim to penetrate the backstage, where they believe the true, authentic, and unstaged culture resides. However, as is made evident in this chapter, these dichotomies are not so clear cut. There are many layers of culture, many degrees to which the effects of tourism are evident, and many contradictions between what even two Bajans of the same background will say about any given topic. Culture is a complex entity to analyze, and Barbados is no exception. But through my own observational and anecdotal evidence, I will attempt to paint the clearest possible picture of Bajan culture and how it interacts with tourism.

## **Rural Bajan Society**

### **Everyday Life in St. Lucy**

One of the hardest adjustments I had to make upon arrival in Barbados was living with the heat. In order to do so, you must live like a Bajan. You must wake up early while it's still cool to do your outdoor chores and go for a jog so you can retire back inside during the intense heat of the day. During the early morning, people collect ripe breadfruit they had grown and any bananas that hadn't been taken by the green monkeys. The rest of their food comes from the nearby grocery store, local produce vendors in town, or the truck that comes to each village selling bread and baked goods. The warmest hours of day are typically spent inside either at work, school, or in the house doing household chores. In our house, there was never a specified dinner time, but after we ate we would watch television together and then go to bed early to prepare for another early rise.

The thing that first grabbed my attention upon arrival in Checker Hall, my village in Saint Lucy, was the variation in homes. Some homes, like mine, were large with 5 bedrooms and 3 full baths. Just a few doors down the dirt road were tiny one-room chattel houses. There were unemployed people, sitting on their porches all day long watching the days go by, who live next to university professors. Some would wake before sunrise to feed their livestock while others walked to the top of the street in their high heels and skirt suits to wait for the blue bus to take them into Bridgetown. Coming from a place where people are clumped together according to economic status, I found that this wasn't the case in Saint Lucy. The amount of variation that occurs within one village also rings true for all Bajans; not all Bajans are alike and there are contradictions when

clumping them together under one umbrella; an important point to remember while reading the rest of this chapter.

For the most part, the stereotype rings true that Bajans are extremely lax and easy going. In Saint Lucy, when Bajans drive through villages, they wave, verbally greet, and honk – not in an angry New York City way, but to acknowledge – at any passing driver, whether they knew them or not. When making plans with each other, times are never specified. It’s always “come anytime!” or “anytime is good!” Life is generally slow paced. People don’t have rigid schedules, most of the people they need to see live within walking distance, and everyone knows everyone. The fact that Bajans are so easy going is a reason why many celebrities choose to vacation there. I heard on numerous accounts that Bajans are just not star-struck people; they are uninterested in fame so celebrities feel as though they can walk down the streets and not be bothered by local people.

However, this relaxed attitude has some drawbacks for Bajan progress. Upon conversing with Beatrice Anderson, the American-born Director of Medical Education at UWI Cave Hill, she admitted her frustrations with the academics she works with because they are *so* lax that they see everything as “just the way it is” with much indifference toward change.

Known to outsiders as “Little England”, Bajans have embraced a few major cultural components from their former British colonizers: their education system, cricket, rum shops, and the church. These have become facts of Bajan life and, religion in particular, has contributed to the generalization of Bajans being very socially conservative. According to the 2010 World Factbook, 63.4% of Bajans identify as Protestant (28.3% Anglican, 18.7% Pentecostal, 5.1% Methodist, 11.3% other), and a

large percentage of them avidly practice their religion. A large number of children are raised into religious families and attend religious primary schools. And it is not uncommon that religious identification can make or break relationships. Often the church is a central component to one's social life. Reputation within the church is crucial and individuals are extremely conscious of their image. Church services are the social events of the week in which people look their best to impress their community members.

The way Bajans dress is another example of their conservative values. People take events like church, graduations, weddings, and funerals as opportunities to look their best to impress their friends and family. While out in public during the day, people are always dressed decently. Men will typically wear trousers and a t-shirt. Women will wear skirts or dresses, always below knee length, and a covering blouse. It is frowned upon to wear anything too revealing. During my first trip to the Speightstown library, I was warned by two guards that my shorts were too short and that next time I would be denied access.

Bajans also exemplify a high level of consciousness to status and reputation. This is evident in the way they present themselves and also their family reputation. In such a small-scale society where everyone seems to know everyone, one's image is very important. For example, it is against the norms to wear beachwear away from the beach. Often they'll even cover their skin while "dipping" in the shallow sea by wearing a t-shirt over their bathing suit. On a typical day in town, you will seldom see people in clothes with stains, holes, or anything old and ratty that they would wear at home. I noticed major differences in the way people dressed in and around their house in comparison to when they left the home. Many women won't leave the house without a weave in their hair and make-up on. One upper class woman I met in Saint Lucy even admitted to never

taking the bus because she thought it made her look bad. And if she *had* to take the bus, she would only take the blue bus (government owned) and not be caught dead in a yellow bus (privately owned, usually by a pair of lower-class men). Chelsea and I were even used as a status marker for our host mother. When we attended church with her, she would always introduce us to *everyone*, showcasing us and identifying us as her daughters.

Many Bajans are very family-oriented. Particularly in rural areas, some extensive families can comprise almost entire villages and can become so large that their name is known all over the island. Relatives all help take care of children, they have frequent extended-family meals and get-togethers, and they are constantly in and out of each other's homes. Although Barbados is seeing more and more of its people traveling abroad, some find themselves unable to sacrifice their family for an independent experience away from home. For example, one young woman I met admitted to denying a scholarship she had earned which granted her the funds to study in America for a year because she couldn't bear to leave her family. However, those who are a bit more removed from the rural, family-oriented lifestyle express some disagreement with that type of existence. One informant, a lifeguard working near a major resort in Speightstown, told me that he frowned upon big families because they tend to be too exclusive. He said "if that's what you want to do, that's your thing. But I'm not like that. For me, I don't like that those kinds of families that only talk to themselves."

Traditional Bajan attitudes toward Barbados-native pop star, Rihanna, are reflective of their conservative lifestyle. Many Bajans express frustrations with Rihanna for her revealing dress and her overtly-sexual lyrics. They feel that she has abandoned her

traditional roots to appeal to the mass media and that she's a sell-out. Moreover, on such a small island, there is only one to a few degrees of separation from every Bajan to Rihanna. Many Bajans know her and her family personally and are angered when she returns to Barbados but ignores her old acquaintances, doesn't respond to her birth name, or other things that disrespect the culture in which she grew up. On the other hand, because she is Bajan, if ever the media portrays her negatively, every Bajan will honestly and wholeheartedly defend her honor because they are a community and they support her.

Bajan conservative norms also include homophobia and the preaching of abstinence as their means of sex education. From what I gathered from villagers in Checker Hall, Bajans are only recently starting to accept the homosexuals in their village but there is still some fear that the known gay man in the village is going to hit on the other men. They say that they're starting to accept them, but they still fear them coming too close. There is some association of AIDS with homosexuals, which is a major contributor to fear of homosexuals, but AIDS is extremely stigmatized among all Bajans.

There is a major lack of sex education and many young people don't know how to protect themselves against pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases. Bajan conservative norms preach abstinence instead of addressing the changing youth culture. Our traditional stereotypes of conservative Christian people would include a nuclear family with married parents that stay married until death, but even among the most conservative and traditional Bajans, these stereotypes don't always ring true. Young people are having their first sexual experiences in their early teens and, as noted above, they're not well-educated about sex. Consequently, young women are getting pregnant at an early age by men they're not married to and the transmission of sexually transmitted

diseases is high. A certain attitude has even emerged among Bajan youth that to have a child is a source of empowerment. Young men use impregnating young women as a sign of masculinity while young women have babies to prove their maturity (G. and S. Gmelch, 2011, Chapter 5). Oftentimes the birth parents are too young to care for their children, so they're left primarily under the baby's grandparents' care. While sitting in on a girls' discussion group, I heard girls speak of the prevalence of young children being sexually active at school, admitting to mimicking what they witnessed their parents doing. A cycle has emerged in which young parents who are sexually uneducated themselves are demonstrating to their children what it means to be sexually active, without them knowing what they're doing. Surprisingly, even the church and some of the most reputation-conscious villagers are accepting of and exemplify this new norm. While attending a Saturday service at a Seventh Day Adventist church, part of the service was devoted to defending a young girl who had recently been impregnated. The minister made sure that the community supported her and didn't shun her. Additionally, divorce is frequent and not at all frowned upon. Bajans tend to get married later than most Americans and their divorce rates are still high.

### **A Changing Society**

During a time of intense globalization, all corners of Barbados are touched by elements of the First World. The tourist belts and densely populated areas are already highly developed, but in the rural Saint Lucy which is far less developed and appears more poor, the increasing prevalence of modern technology is impressive and intense. The majority of households have a television, internet, and cars. Devices like Blackberry



cell phones, Nintendo Wii game systems, and plasma televisions are a common sight. Through the internet and Skype, Bajans' worlds have grown much larger in recent years. Instead of being limited to regular contact with only their fellow villagers, they can now regularly talk to their closest friends in all corners of the world. Even the youngest members of my extended host family, around the age of 8, told me that most kids in their classes have cell phones and Facebook pages that they use to communicate with each other regularly. These are things that many Bajans pride themselves on. My own host mother was extremely proud to be Bajan because they are thought of as the most progressive and advanced country in the Caribbean.

The introduction to such telecommunications has changed the face of village life. Although the traditional village relationships and practices described above still persist, they are supplemented by a new wave of individualism and privacy. As a local friend explained to me, people now feel as though they have things to protect so they're more likely to lock their doors. People are easily entertained by the television, so there's less need to occupy themselves with their neighbor's company. I experienced this in my village of Checker Hall during the 2010 World Cup. Upon leaving the house midday, walking down the street in Checker Hall I could hear the buzzing of the vuvuzelas coming from the televisions inside nearly every house. Most villagers were in their homes watching the same soccer games, but by themselves.

There are obvious elements of the First World, like fast food restaurants, in the more populated areas of the island, but modern technology is even beginning to encroach upon the most sacred and traditional elements of rural Bajan culture. I was surprised to see that the church my host family attended used a PowerPoint presentation to facilitate

the entire service. An outline of the service, the passages being read, and lyrics to the hymns were projected on a big screen at the front of the church; a clear synthesis between the traditional and modern.

Like their First World visitors, Bajans are also becoming more cultured through migration and travel. Although some admit to the difficulty in obtaining a visa, for those who have one, they travel frequently. It is very common for Bajans to migrate to Europe or America to attend school or earn enough money to eventually move back to Barbados and be wealthy. Additionally, since most products are imported internationally, Bajans find it extremely expensive to shop for clothing or household goods locally. To avoid this, many travel to New York or Miami to shop in bulk for their friends and family. This rings true for all Bajans living all over the country.

Globalization, communicative technologies, and a broader worldview draw some criticisms from scholars for the changes that they're forcing upon local culture. During my experience doing field work, I formed relationships with a few different North American scholars working in Barbados. Like the scholarly literature on the anthropology of tourism, they seemed to hold very strong paternalistic opinions toward the preservation of traditional Bajan culture. However, in comparing their opinions with those of the locals, I found that they were quite contrasting.

When explaining my research to Beatrice Anderson, the American-born Director of Medical Education at UWI Cave Hill, she explained her stance on Bajans' attitudes toward their slave history. She said that in reference to heritage tourism, most Bajans would be uninterested in preserving old plantation homes because they'd serve as a reminder of, not *Barbados'* history, but *colonial* history. She claims that Bajans'

perception of Barbados' history seems to be of the post-colonial era. She acknowledged the complexities of her argument by stating how unusually welcoming Bajans are toward visitors and how geared they are toward improving their tourism product (i.e. preserving plantation homes for heritage tourism). Anderson admitted that Bajans like the British, they like outsiders, and they know that their friendly service is good for their economy, and they would never admit that tourism is a new form of slavery. Dating back to the colonial era, Bajans have distinguished themselves from other West Indians who, even as slaves, were significantly more hostile and rebellious and are currently much more unreceptive to outsiders vacationing in their country than Bajans. Yet she argues that their aversion to preserving plantation history is because they don't want to remember that piece of their country's history. Although she makes some logical points, they are derived from her own interpretations of the situation and I fear that her paternalistic views excuse the Bajan happiness and lax attitude as false consciousness. Not to disagree with her, but she is one of many that think they know best how Bajans feel and should feel, even when such opinions are never made explicit by the people themselves.

I experienced similar opinions coming from Canadian environmentalist Anne Collins doing work in Barbados. As a side project, Chelsea and I went door-to-door in the Saint Lucy village of River Bay to gather information from its residents. River Bay is currently a popular picnic area with cliffs overlooking the turbulent northeastern coast. Many people "dip" in the shallow waters, but the tides are too strong to swim. River Bay used to have a more vibrant cultural scene where community life was stronger, people would frequently visit for fish fries, and they'd attend the now shut-down dance hall. Collins was part of a project that was planning on implementing a visitors' site at River

Bay to talk about how special the area was and she wanted us to collect information on family histories, local interest, insight on cultural significance, and any circulating stories about the area from the local people. Collins seemed to think this was a great idea because she felt that it had a history worth sharing with the public and its declining cultural significance deserved to be preserved. However, none of the River Bay locals shared any of her enthusiasm. Their only interest in the visitor's center was the potential for creating jobs for locals. Otherwise, they didn't feel a passionate connection to the place at all. I found this interesting because, as an educated environmentalist, she clearly thought that the dissipating traditions of a particular area were worth preserving. To Collins, it was a shame that River Bay has lost the vibrancy it once had, even though the people themselves expressed no qualms about this.

Collins also expressed similar concern about the new development that is being built in Pickering, Saint Lucy. A recently published article by Mike King in the Sunday Sun described the development as including “a 200-unit hotel, a private day-care centre, a primary school to accommodate 350 pupils, recreational amenities, heritage parks, greens, lakes, tree-lined boulevards, an amphitheatre and a bus terminal,” (King, 2010). The general tone of the article was very optimistic and it quoted MP Denis Kellman as trying to give back to Saint Lucy by providing its residents with a sustainable addition that will change the landscape of the parish. In a contrasting light, Collins finds that changing landscape detrimental to the culture of Saint Lucy. Saint Lucy is known for being “country” and she assumed people liked it that way. The major development would only deplete the last corner of Barbados that is mostly untouched by tourists and the First World (although as described above, that fact is changing). However, her opinion was

adamantly opposed by locals. Everyone in Saint Lucy that I spoke to about Pickering was extremely excited. They have felt ignored by Barbados' officials and saw the development as their gift. Locals look forward to the job opportunities it provides and the close amenities that they've never had. My host mother said she "can't wait for the day to go to the market without driving all the way to Speightstown. Saint Lucy has nothing!" And even without my initiation, many of the River Bay residents expressed their own excitement for the development.

Both River Bay and Pickering are examples of Bajans' standards changing. For Saint Lucy residents, they enjoy being removed from the tourist belts and the hustle and bustle that is taking over some of the island. But their far removal has come with the consequence of what they see as being ignored. They don't feel the same special bond with their land and the "country" lifestyle that scholars might expect. They are part of a developing world and they want to experience it. They're willing to allow for their traditional culture to evolve. In fact, someone like Jade, the bartender at Winedown, expressed excitement about the development in Pickering. She, a Barbados resident, had never found reason to venture all the way to Saint Lucy. This development, she thought, could be that reason. Is it possible then, that such developments could create a new sense of community among Bajans, even amidst the increasingly private lives that have become a norm in Saint Lucy? Could technology have the power to build up communities after it had, in a sense, broken them down? The history of River Bay has become merely an afterthought and the rural landscape of Saint Lucy can be sacrificed for modern infrastructure, jobs, and amenities. Scholars like Anne Collins see this as detrimental and sad, but clearly those paternalistic views do not resonate among these people anymore.

## **The Heart of the Tourist Scene**

Moving down the coast, I will now share my insights on the way of life in the tourist-dominated areas. When driving down the major coastal highway, Holetown (one of the most tourist dominated areas on the West coast) has a very familiar and Americanized feel. There are gas stations, shopping centers, large banks, elegant restaurants, and numerous classy resorts. There was major construction being done on the new Limegrove “lifestyle centre,” an 85,000 square foot retail space that will house the most upscale shopping, dining, entertainment, and apartments ([www.limegrove.com](http://www.limegrove.com)). There are sun-burnt tourists milling about between shops and exploring what the area has to offer. In this area, the face-to-face interactions between hosts and guests are much more prevalent and the impact of tourism has a much clearer effect on the landscape. Here we will look at some of the more obvious impacts of tourism on local culture.

### **Tourism Creating Traditions**

As discussed above, even some of Barbados’ most remote communities are changing due to globalization and Barbados’ tourism market has allowed the economy to flourish for these changes to occur. Whether through face-to-face interactions or through economic gains, tourism has played a major role in Barbados’ changing culture. But tourism has the ability to serve as both an agent for social evolution as well as cultural continuity. One of the main objectives for some tourists is to penetrate the backstage, seeking “authentic” experiences. To meet these needs, tourism often tries to sell the “authentic.” As discussed earlier, what is to be considered authentic is relative, and tourism has the power to both create and preserve cultural traditions to feed the tourists’

need for authenticity. The presence of tourism in Barbados has done this to both positive and negative effects.

An example of a tradition that tourists have preserved is the creation and commodification of local art. Although commodification can often be viewed in a negative light by scholars, in many Bajan cases, tourists have saved the creation of certain Bajan artifacts. For example, Chalky Mount is a village in Saint Lucy that has always been famous for its pottery. Bajans used to use monkey jars, large porous ceramic pots, to keep their water cool before refrigeration. Although there's no current need for monkey jars today, tourists' interest in such elements of traditional Bajan culture has kept the market alive. Upon visiting Chalky Mount, one of the three potters left told us that pottery has been a longstanding tradition in his family. Most Bajans wouldn't care if monkey jars and other artifacts ceased to be produced, but because tourists have kept them in business, Bajans regularly buy such items to preserve their cultural traditions.

An example of a tradition that tourists have helped create is the Crop Over festival. Crop Over dates back to slave days when plantations would each celebrate the season's sugar cane harvest. However, in 1974, Crop Over was deemed a national celebration with the intention of drawing more tourists during the slow summer months. Since then, the National Cultural Foundation has transformed Crop Over into a major production, borrowing ideas from Mardi Gras and Trinidad's Carnival, adding glitz and glamour to the major celebration. Crop Over has become so monumental for locals and many Bajans living abroad return home for the major celebration. Some tourists participate in the festivities, but it is not thought of as tourist-induced. It is very much the celebration of the year for all Bajans (G. and S. Gmelch, 2011). In this case, tourists were

the inspiration behind an iconic cultural event, and ironically, they are only rare participants.

A very negative example of a cultural phenomenon that tourists created is the heavy drug use that resonates throughout Barbados. Marijuana is most prevalent, although some harder drugs persist, too. The drug market originated out of response to tourists' demand when Barbados became a heavily commercialized tourist destination. Since then, heavy drug use has leaked its way into mainstream Bajan culture. I heard numerous rumors that there was a drug transshipment site in Saint Lucy and that because of the drug market, the police force had become corrupt. Much of Barbados' youth frequently use and sell drugs. There is a major fear that between drugs and tourism, Bajan youth will become lazy and uneducated because it's becoming very easy for them to make quick money.

These are three very different examples of the ways in which the influence of tourism can inspire the innovation or preservation of cultural traditions. However, like with drugs, the traditions are not always beneficial to society.

### **Hosts and Guests Sharing Space**

A major problem with tourism is that it has a habit of designating certain areas as its own, taking them away from the locals. On a small island with such concentrated tourist belts, locals are getting pushed out of these spaces. For instance, Bridgetown and the cruise ship ports are filled with duty-free stores. Aside from the economic issues at hand, duty-free stores serve as an invisible barrier for locals. On one occasion, I was stopped in Bridgetown by a Bajan man who wanted me to take his money and buy him



sneakers with my passport because he wasn't granted the same discount. While evidently these occasions and places exist, there are some that might be less deserving of such scholarly criticism.

Tourists are drawn to Barbados first and foremost for their beautiful beaches. Barbados' beaches are iconic and contribute to the tourists' perception of fantastical paradise. As the tourism industry continues to develop, the West and South coast beaches are being taken over by hotel and restaurant fronts. Even though there is no such thing as a privately owned beach in Barbados, it has become a norm that there are certain beaches that locals should not go. But again, this is a norm and not a rule. I can imagine that the sole black beachgoer would feel uncomfortable and intimidated going for a dip at a luxury resort filled with wealthy white tourists. However, I question the degree that which Bajans actually feel as though their precious space is being taken away and redistributed. Most Bajans cannot swim. One lifeguard told me that most kids never learn to swim because of the fear of being swept away to sea, and that fear resonates through adulthood so they never feel the need to learn. One woman admitted to being unable to see the appeal of swimming. Instead of swimming, many Bajans enjoy an occasional dip in the shallow water, but even this they don't generally do regularly because of the disagreement between the salt water and the texture of their hair. But regardless of their swimming capabilities or desires, many Bajans still enjoy playing in the sand. My host brother taught us how to make sandballs out of moist sand and we frequently saw people playing soccer or fishing on the shore. Moreover, Bajans usually only go to the beach at dawn or dusk to avoid the midday heat, so their schedules don't typically overlap with many tourists'. As the major attraction of Barbados' landscape, the beach is well-

integrated into Bajans' lifestyle. However, their frequency and use of the areas don't remotely compare to the tourists' value of the beach.

Barbados' attractions have also become, by norm, dominated by tourists. Although the purpose of these sites is arguably to attract tourists, they have become places meant almost exclusively for them. This is somewhat contradictory because, as discussed earlier Barbados' niche is heritage tourism, celebrating Barbados' history. Yet Bajans rarely go to these places that are supposed to celebrate *them*. I asked a few women who have lived in Saint Lucy their entire lives if they'd ever been to Saint Nicholas Abbey, the refurbished plantation home in the neighboring parish of Saint Peter. They shrugged their shoulders and admitted they had not. They didn't admit to feeling unwelcomed or uninterested, but they said that since they knew it wasn't going anywhere, it just wasn't a priority. Instead, locals usually save their visits to tourist attractions for when their friends come and want to be shown around. This rings true for attractions that are unrelated to slave history, so at least on the conscious level, I don't think that the argument of slave history as an uncomfortable topic is valid here.

While I don't doubt that locals are becoming closed off to certain parts of the island, I wonder how much they want to utilize these spaces anyway and the conscious level of anger it causes.

As much as there are nightlife hot spots specifically targeted at either locals or tourists, no place is exclusive and nightlife is a realm in which Bajans see no boundaries. In fact, St. Lawrence Gap, the most popular strip of tourist bars, is often crawling with locals. Corinne, a bartender in St. Lawrence Gap, had a lot to say about the interactions she experienced while working. First, tourists were her preferred customer. They always

seem to be in a good mood and just looking to have a good time. She preferred serving tourists over locals also because locals were always playing the victim of self-inflicted racism. But when locals weren't giving the bartender or waitress a hard time for unequal treatment, they were hitting on tourists. Corinne said she saw this a lot. Locals and tourists would often leave together, which Corinne saw as a result of both the visitor letting loose and hooking up with a local (after all, no one at home would know) and the local trying to benefit (sexually or by reputation) from those desires. And some locals choose to go to such bars because they enjoy American Top 40 music. Even though some bars, like those in St. Lawrence Gap, try to appeal to tourists, they're not meant to repel locals. Locals enjoy such places and clearly don't mind interacting with tourists or dealing with their [drunken] behavior.

Another place that tourists and locals party together is a village called Moon Town with a very popular karaoke bar. The crowd here is generally older and everyone seems to sing and drink and converse on an equal level. When the tourists (usually older couples) come, they tend to keep to themselves. But locals will talk to anyone, regardless of who they came with. After a certain hour, the karaoke ends, the tourists leave, and the bar quickly becomes a club playing calypso music and everyone starts pairing off and "wukking up". Tourists don't get kicked out in order for this to occur, but they're usually already gone since they're not accustomed to being out as late as the Bajans.

It's clear that locals don't see many boundaries for their party life. Tourist areas don't have a reduced appeal, and Bajans comprise all of the customers at certain places not advertised to tourists, like soca fetes (parties associated with Crop Over) for example. I was talking to two of our friends that do promotional work for soca fetes during the

summer and I asked them why they didn't publicize fetes making them more accessible to tourists. Their response was "wow, I've never thought of that! Good idea!" Not that I was trying to condone tourists penetrating into some of the only local hot spots, but I wondered about the intention behind only targeting specific audiences. Their response was surprising, but they continued to make it clear to me that locals like tourists and like partying with them. Bajans may have different drinking habits, musical preferences, and dancing styles than tourists, but Bajans are not exclusive about who they party with. Tourists like to get roasted drunk and Bajans don't mind. They're just there to have a good time and Bajans are not afraid to join in.

### **Host/Guest Interactions**

Before I understood how much Bajans enjoyed partying anywhere with anyone and weren't constantly on the prowl for tourists, I was skeptical of their kindness. After having read about how locals kindness was a result of the money and status attached to tourists, I was particularly nervous when we were out and dancing and people had been drinking. Locals were always coming up to us and wanting to be our friends and I feared that their kindness was not genuine, that what we considered "friendship" was not mutual.

These feelings rang particularly true with Bajan men. From what I understand about Bajan culture, men and women are not "friends." They're either having sex, in a relationship, or nothing at all. Although we were careful not to cross any lines with any of our informants, we still questioned what their real intentions were. Our host mother assured us that Bajan men were relentless and only interested in "linking up" so they

could tell their friends they got with a white girl. To preserve our own comfort, safety, and our host mother's reputation, we were conscientious about with whom we spent our time. And even if our so-called friendship wasn't mutual, which our host mother was sure that it was not, I realized I didn't have much of a choice but to accept their kindness as real. Despite the nervousness of being thought of as a dollar sign or a tale to tell one's friends, it was impossible to ignore all of the selfless acts of kindness and the unmatched friendliness that we experienced. Walking down the street, everyone says hello if not engages in a real conversation. If we ever had a question, strangers would be more than happy to answer it. When waiting for a bus, cars passing and heading in our direction would offer to drive us free of charge. There were numerous instances where local people greeted us with the utmost kindness with no intention of any sort of repayment or personal gain. For example, when touring the island with George and Sharon Gmelch upon first arrival, whenever we looked lost, Bajans would go out of their way to lead us in their car back to a main street. Often there was never even a face-to-face interaction. Other times, we'd be walking and people would greet us from their porch step 50 yards away. Conversation wouldn't go beyond a greeting and they wanted nothing in return for their kindness except a kind word back.

I spent a long time questioning the friendships I had made and what they meant. I always want to see the best in people and once I became used to seeing the same friendly faces day after day, it was hard for me to think of them as people who wanted, in dramatic terms, to use me. Corinne, the bartender at Making Waves summed up my questions behind the interactions between most hosts and guests: "They're always nice to tourists because they want them to come back. I think they're aware that Barbados is

looked at like that and it's obviously good for our economy if tourists experience that friendliness. So yes, they will be nice to them. And I think it is natural. We kind of grow up that way." Had I not read the tourism literature beforehand, I would believe that Bajans were the most genuinely kind group of people in the world. I don't wish to retract this statement, but there is an element of obligation by the local people to behave that way towards tourists. But the obligation is not always for personal gain. For better or worse, the obligation is culturally embedded within them to a point where I believe their kindness is genuine.

### **Working in the Industry**

The positive attitude toward tourists and tourism resonates through all levels of the hierarchy within the tourism industry. Of the workers that I encountered, not one expressed any dismay about working in the tourism industry. Of course everyone experiences bad days, but there was never overt discontent about their job title, regardless of the prestige (or lack thereof) attached to a particular job. People like Colin Jordan (President of the Barbados Hotel and Tourism Association) and Gail Yearwood (Ministry of Tourism's Chief Research Officer) stressed the importance of their job for the well-being of their country. On the opposite end of the status spectrum, Danny, a cab driver, equally loved his job. In fact, his favorite customers are tourists. His favorite days are when he gets called to bring a family or a couple around the island on a tour. He maximizes his income this way and he gets to engage in real conversation with his customers. "I get to know them and that's real nice." Although he didn't talk about his

job in a way that suggested the betterment of Bajan society, the positive effects are more internal and personal.

Since this thesis deals particularly with bartenders, I will return to some of their widely shared perceptions about their role in the industry. Carlton said, “When you meet nice guests, nice guests make your job so much easier. They teach you things. Never think that persons from another culture can’t teach you things, because they always can. That’s also why I like to travel, because I get to know the culture, see how people do things.” There is a great level of intrinsic value from interacting with nice guests. The cultural interactions are about learning and self-discovery opposed to one person serving another. Melvin described his experience working in the bar as something worth pursuing. It’s a reliable industry, the people are nice, and there’s never been a real reason for change. In reference to tourism potentially being a form of neocolonialism, Jonathan said, “in some places like Bermuda, a lot of people who work in tourism are non-nationals because Bermudans don’t like to work in tourism for that reason. To be honest, in Barbados, working in tourism is not a bad paying job and you can make some good tips.” I repeatedly heard of the softened mentality of Bajans in comparison to their West Indian neighbors which leaves them happy with their jobs and their contribution to society.

One interesting perspective was that of Peter, a self-employed jet-ski operator. I saw Peter frequently in Speightstown trying to get business from tourists at the beach. When I asked him if he liked his job he said, “Yeah, sure. The visitors are cool. Sometimes I wish I got more business, but I work for myself so if I really wanted, I could probably try harder and get more business. But I like working for myself because I don’t

have to report to nobody.” Peter didn’t see himself as a worker in the tourism industry, I think because he’s not directly hired by anyone. I’m not sure if the neglect of that notion is because he doesn’t want to be thought of as a tourism worker, or if it’s a genuine self-perception. Regardless, Peter seemed content with his job and the benefits and drawbacks of being self-employed.

I recognize that my sample of informants is skewed. For the less official positions, all of the workers I spoke to engaged in regular contact with tourists. Perhaps people like maids or chefs who don’t have regular interactions with tourists might hold a different opinion. However, for those I met that do, their sense of pride and satisfaction is noteworthy. As the literature so strongly suggests, there may be some underlying level of discontent and self-reassurance, but assuming they’re being honest and not just trying to please me, their conscious level of self-perception speaks volumes of the role that tourism plays in Bajan culture, particularly regarding the interactions between hosts and guests.

One of the major problems of working in the tourism industry, according to the bartenders, is dealing with locals. Although I believe that Bajans are at the core very relaxed and kind people, my personal conjecture is that they might feel a sense of protection and entitlement over certain venues when they’re sharing them with tourists. The kindness and helpfulness of the village life appear to succumb to the reputation and image-consciousness that occurs when people leave their village and enter the more public areas. Bartenders Corinne and Bradley both felt very passionately that Bajans were absolutely the worst customers to serve. Corinne admitted that “Bajans are definitely the people that get the most under our skin when we’re serving them...They’re just demanding, but in almost self-demeaning ways.” In the context of the “backstage”,



Bajans are genuinely kind to each other, yet there is a sense of pride among many individuals who feel the need to exert their power over others in certain situations. Although I can only speculate, it seems like there may be an element of over-compensation on the Bajans' parts. For example, if they're at a bar or a restaurant, their business is just as valid as a tourist's, so they should be treated the same. To assure equal treatment, they might play up their image so they feel equally, if not more, important than the tourist. This complication lends itself to issues between locals when in "front stage" spaces.

### **Social Gatherings without Tourists**

The final section of this chapter moves further down the coast to Bridgetown and Christ Church. Since this thesis has an emphasis on bartenders and tourists' drinking behavior, it is only fair that it is contrasted with the typical Bajan party scene and drinking habits when tourists are not present. My field work was conducted during the summer, Barbados' party season. The summer months consist of numerous parties that eventually lead up to their climaxing celebration in August, which all comprise the famous Crop Over festival. Crop Over originated as a harvest festival during Barbados' colonial era, celebrating the year's sugar cane harvest. Barbados' monumental festival has evolved into a major party and parade in Bridgetown with calypso music, dancing, arts, contests, and other festivities for Bajans of all ages to enjoy. Although I unfortunately couldn't stay for the final event, I attended numerous "soca fetes", (outdoor parties) that preceded the final Crop Over festival.

Interestingly, soca fetes are not typically attended by tourists. The parties are advertised on fliers, online, and by word of mouth, but they're not typically directed at tourists. In fact, in my experiences at soca fetes, Chelsea and I were always the only white people there. From what I could speculate, the ages of the soca fete attendees ranged from 20 to 40. The parties were held outside, usually in big parking lots that are transformed with tents into outdoor clubs. There's usually a stage with a DJ playing calypso music, a tent for food vendors, and a tent for the bar. People usually arrive at these fetes around midnight and don't often leave until sunrise.

Bajans are known to be exceptional dancers. To foreigners, their dance style ("wukking up") is thought to be outrageously sexual, but to Bajans, it's a cultural art form. A skill acquired at a young age, mostly all Bajans can wuk up, moving their hips in ways that behave as if they're detached from their bodies. The more conservative Bajans are typically more shy and won't wuk up in public, but the real party-goers will dance non-stop all night. A local friend told me that Bajans drink a lot of alcohol throughout the course of a night but never really get drunk because they dance so much and sweat it out.

The bars at soca fetes serve individual drinks, but most people buy entire bottles of liquor and individual bottles of soda to make their own mixed drinks. I was initially astonished by this, thinking of the sloppiness that would occur in America if people were to buy entire bottles of liquor for themselves. But Bajans never seemed to get drunk the way [at least college-aged] Americans do. Their level of drunkenness to this day confuses me. Depending on who you ask, Bajans "never get *drunk*" or they often get "roasted" (a popular term for sloppy drunk; there's even a website in which Bajans post pictures of their friends who are roasted). One cab driver told me that, unlike tourists, "most Bajans

don't get roasted drunk. They can handle their alcohol." But the same people who say that Bajans often get roasted will also say that they're never too drunk to drive home, which many Bajans do.

Aside from soca fetes in the summer, there aren't many choices for real clubs for Bajans to attend that are unvisited by tourists. The one strictly Bajan club that I attended, Club X-Treme, had a very different atmosphere than the soca fetes. Club X-Treme is located in Christ Church, only a 3-minute walk from St. Lawrence Gap, the strip with all of the tourist bars. Despite their close proximity, tourists don't go there. Its exterior is dark and smoky with unfamiliar, deep, dub-style music with sexually offensive lyrics playing (opposed to the American hits playing at tourists bars or the happy dance-and-party-all-night-long calypso music at the soca fetes), perhaps an uninviting sight to foreigners. In fact, we saw two German men walk to the parking lot and turn right around out of intimidation. Upon entry, there are separate lines for males and females because everyone gets patted down before entering. When I was inside, I found myself talking to one of the bar owners who told me that Club X-Treme is the "most ghetto" bar in Barbados. There are frequent fights between members of different gangs, of which she told me there were members representing 50 different ones that night. Drugs and violence are things that the owners are trying to address by tightening security, forcing club-goers to leave their guns in the safes next to the coat room and confiscating any drugs they see.

Compared to the women at the soca fetes who dressed casually (but more revealing than their everyday attire), nearly every woman at Club X-Treme wore high heels, fishnet stockings, and next to nothing for a shirt and skirt/shorts. (We later learned that, because it was "Rude Tuesday" at Club X-Treme, "anything goes" in terms of

female dress.) From what I saw, the clientele ranged from 18-30 years old and a 65:35 male to female ratio. The club has lots of specials to encourage women to come, like having certain hours or nights with free entry and discounted drinks. Often women won't have enough money to buy their own drinks, so the club discounts them to keep them coming, and therefore keep the men coming.

These observations about dress and drinking habits seem to directly contradict some of the major points made above about conservative Bajan society. And as also mentioned previously, not all "norms" are exhibited by all Bajans. The more religious and conservative Bajans err on the side of not drinking. My host mother – an image-conscious, family-oriented, and prominent figure in the church – said she had never drunk more than a beer at a time in her entire life. Many of her siblings and extended family members drink, but never in excess. Children are exposed to alcohol at a young age which is why she says there never seems to be a strong interest in getting drunk. In fact, most Bajans don't even know what the drinking age is because it's never enforced. She is someone that would laugh at me and Chelsea for being unable to wuk up like the locals, but she would always shy away from doing so herself.

My classmate Chelsea and I were treated very differently at soca fetes versus Club X-Treme. At the soca fetes, people would approach us and we formed friendships with a lot of the party-goers. The same people went to the same fetes so we ended up seeing a lot of them regularly. Both men and women alike always recognized us and were extremely nice. They all knew we were staying with our host brother with whom we usually attended, so it felt safe. At Club X-Treme, the atmosphere was much more intimidating. Instead of people acting excited to talk to us like we regularly experienced,

people instead looked at us like we didn't belong there. We had heard from many informants about Club X-Treme being a major place for locals to party (the consensus seemed to be either you loved Club X-Treme or you hated it) so we felt compelled to go and experience it for ourselves. We actually felt unsafe without the protection of our homestay brother and people just knew we didn't belong. It was more a sense of being looked at suspiciously (because white people rarely go) than receiving extra attention and cat calls that made us feel unwelcome and unsafe.

Unlike most visitors, I experienced the few nightlife venues for locals only (not by rule, but by custom). Every place had a different atmosphere, so it's difficult to make generalizations about *how* Bajans typically party. It is common knowledge that Bajans dance in ways that few visitors could mimic. They stay out until the early hours of the morning. They drive home after being out and drinking all night. The biggest mystery to me is still *how* drunk they get, or what their definition of drunk is. One man told me a story of how he drank 9 bottles of wine himself in one night, but he wasn't drunk. Others pride themselves on getting roasted. As I tried to interpret the range of responses I gathered from numerous informants, they did all seem to have the same standard and expectation for tourists' level of drunkenness. This was thought of as expected and nothing to hold a grudge for. The only time when tourist's drunkenness was a problem was when they instigate fights between other people, usually foreign women starting a fight between two local men.

## Conclusion

As made evident in this chapter, the front/back stage dichotomy doesn't quite fit in Barbados. Through tourism, Barbados' economy has lent itself to become a developed country where evidence of globalization and modern technology penetrate even the most traditional areas of Barbados. Therefore, even if tourists are not directly present, the impact of the industry is evident everywhere. And in most cases, Bajans see this as a good thing! They pride themselves on being one of the most developed countries in the Caribbean and enjoy elements of the modern world.

In analyzing the impacts that tourism has on local culture, I found it increasingly hard to define what local culture was. Culture is complex, it differs from region to region, and people have different values. Many contradictions occur when trying to describe Bajan culture. For example, they are statistically a religious people, yet having babies at a young age out of wedlock is not atypical and is widely accepted. Some people value large families while others find them to be too exclusive in Barbados' open and friendly society. Some people think Bajans never get drunk while others think they get roasted. Culture is complicated and moving from the rural parish of Saint Lucy down the West coast to Bridgetown and Christ Church, people's daily lives differ.

However, one thing remained constant throughout this ethnography. The physical presence of tourists and the face-to-face host/guest interactions rarely seemed problematic. At least on the conscious level, Bajans are receptive to tourists. They enjoy conversing with them and learning from them. Bajans don't seem to be phased by tourists' behavior, whether it is excessively drunk, entitled, rude, or even overtly friendly. Beneath the surface, there are still elements of racism and neocolonialism at play, so

maybe their positive attitudes are a means of self-reassurance. The presence of tourism and the importance of being nice to tourists have become culturally embedded entities to a point where their friendly demeanor is real. So even if there are some subconscious elements of oppression, their conscious level of acceptance, kindness, and tolerance I believe is genuine.

## CONCLUSION

The chapters of this thesis explain very different but essential components to the picture of Bajan culture and the role that tourism plays within it. But unlike other scholars, I discovered that it's impossible to classify tourism's relationship with Barbados using the framework of "authentic," "front stage," or "backstage." Culture is too complex of an entity to describe in these simple terms. There are too many layers to the culture, too many ways in which tourism comes face-to-face with Bajan culture, and too many angles to view the cultural exchanges that occur. Such a broad exploration lends itself to a very multi-dimensional approach, which is what I hope this ethnography accomplished.

The Literature Review was meant to provide the scholarly framework and critiques of all issues surrounding tourism. I found this discourse to be incredibly daunting and overwhelmingly pessimistic. While the issues surrounding the political economy, environmental concerns, power dynamics, and neocolonialism, to name a few, certainly are negative and can result in dangerous consequences, the lack of the native voice lead me to believe that such scholarly criticisms were a bit too paternalistic and accusatory of false consciousness, if not in so many words. This skepticism and sense of responsibility toward the people of Barbados, people who welcomed me with open arms, happily assisted me with my research, and contributed to an overall wonderful learning experience, inspired me to explore all aspects of Bajan culture to holistically analyze the impact of tourism on local culture.

Chapter 1 was meant to paint a picture of the scale and nature of the tourism industry in Barbados. For such a small and densely populated country, all Bajans are



subject to face-to-face interactions with tourists. While some places and some people experience this more than others, the economical, political, and sociological impacts of tourism on the entire country and all of its inhabitants are quite noteworthy. Tourism is so essential for Barbados' flourishing economy and there are great efforts being made to improve the industry's sustainability and autonomy. While there are some clear negative effects of tourism that are evident in Barbados, mostly all Bajans have identified tourism as a central component to their country's ideal vision for itself.

Chapter 2 served the purpose of giving a voice to the Bajans who have the most intimate face-to-face contact with tourists; bartenders. Host/guest interactions are very interesting and extremely telling of *how* one should analyze the role of tourism in Barbados. How do the locals feel about serving their guests? What are their interactions like? Do they enjoy working in the tourism industry? These bartenders' personal accounts are central to my analysis of how tourism fits into Barbados' broader society. After all, is it fair for an outsider to deem an entire industry unethical or unfair if the people who, according to the scholarly literature, serve and deal with tourists the most disagree?

Finally, Chapter 3 attempts at painting a picture of Bajan culture as a whole. Moving geographically from the rural regions that are less interrupted by tourism to tourist-dominated areas, it is clear that Bajan culture has multiple layers. Based on anecdotal evidence, I attempt at painting a picture of the complexities, contradictions, stereotypes, and noteworthy experiences that are most telling of Bajan culture. It's clear that many of my experiences were dictated by the fact that I was a white, American female; a tourist by the looks. This gave me special insight on host/guest relations which,

along with my interviews with bartenders, provided me with the material to draw some conclusions about the effects of tourism on local culture.

While there were certainly some underlying traces of racism, imperialism, and power dynamics at play, the overwhelming response of locals to tourism and the contact and fusion with the First World was of pride and enjoyment. Bajans pride themselves on being one of the more advanced Caribbean nations, they are intrigued by technology and encourage its presence in even the most remote and traditional corners of the country. Those who worked in the industry were unanimously intrigued by tourists. They enjoy conversing with them and learning from them. And compared to other Bajans, all bartenders identified tourists as the best customers. While there may be a subconscious level of justification and reaffirmation of their role in the industry when bartenders brush aside tourists' often unreasonably high expectations or excessively drunk behavior, consciously these things are easily accepted and justified.

Throughout the process of writing this thesis, I discovered that I had to abandon the scholarly framework and lens that I had become familiar with. I found it unfair to refute the overwhelmingly unanimous set of responses that pointed to tourism as a positive contribution to individual lives and Barbados' culture/economy by saying that deep down it's a form of neocolonialism and Bajans are unknowingly oppressed by the First World tourists that visit their country. Even if it seems to me that some elements of oppression may indeed be present, if Bajans' conscious response is positive, then their word should be taken at face value.

This now begs the question; so what? Why does it matter that Barbados' economy is dependent on the vulnerable tourism industry? Or that Barbados is hoping to expand

their heritage tourism to celebrate Barbados' history, yet no locals express any interest in visiting? Or that the glass ceiling is finally showing some cracks and more and more Bajans are earning top managerial positions in the industry? Or that no local will get mad at a tourist for being too drunk because it's expected? Tourism affects nearly every aspect of local Bajan culture. And if there is some truth behind the scholarly critique that tourism is an industry/practice built on inequality, I think that we are now faced with a challenge. There is such a thing as responsible tourism. Simple actions such as researching local customs, investing in the local economy, and engaging in friendly conversations with locals will begin the process of eliminating some of the imperialism that seems imbedded in tourism. Tourism is a form of cultural interaction and we have the power to make these interactions positive and beneficial for all. By being conscious of the positive and negative effects of tourism on local culture, we have the ability to make educated choices to enhance the positive and diminish the negative effects.

My experience conducting my own research in Barbados was truly eye-opening. I have nothing but happy memories of those I got to know and I am forever thankful for those who assisted me with this exploration. I hope that my passion for Bajan people and Bajan culture was evident in this ethnography and that it inspires people to become conscious, educated, and responsible tourists. Because when done right, tourism has the potential for beneficial experiences for everyone involved.

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