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Caribbean Feminist Research Methods: An Editorial Note

Kamala Kempadoo and Halimah DeShong

Research is integral to Caribbean feminist studies on gender and sexualities and encompasses specific approaches as well as common methods and techniques. It can include participant observation, discourse or media analysis, statistical analyses, oral histories, community discussions, focus groups, archival research, interviewing, questionnaire surveys, or even research in library holdings. Research, after all, is what makes studies of social relations, practices and identities plausible, relevant, action- or policy-focussed, or, simply, interesting. Yet as we, the editors of this special issue, have found through our teaching in the academy about Caribbean feminisms, there is a paucity of materials that explicitly and consistently take up questions of how to do feminist research in the English-speaking Caribbean, that interrogate relations of power in the regional context, or are grounded in Caribbean cultural, social, or political experiences. We rely mostly on texts that are drawn from and relate to Caribbean sociology or to North American and European feminist experiences and examples. The paucity is even more evident when we are engaged in training Caribbean researchers-to-be outside the academy or when conducting research for government departments, international agencies, or non-governmental organizations. So, while there is growing interest in Caribbean gender and sexualities studies amongst different communities, and a growing demand for research in these areas by a variety of public and private organizations, there are few resources that can assist students and researchers in developing critical frameworks, analyses and skills for researching gender and sexualities. There are even fewer published resources to draw on which speak to feminist methodologies that emerge from specific Caribbean colonial and postcolonial histories and conditions. This special

issue of the *Caribbean Review of Gender Studies* (CRGS) comprises, then, a first step in bringing together ideas about how to conduct Caribbean feminist research, in an effort to improve the quality of research in the region and to provide some tools that can be used in the research process that will allow for sound analysis about gender and sexuality.

Caribbean feminist research has an important history tracing back to Lucille Mathurin Mair's work in the early 1970s on women during slavery in Jamaica and to the Women in the Caribbean Project (WICP) in the 1980s (Mathurin Mair 2006; Massiah 1986; Senior 1991). Participatory action research was also critical to the making of the Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action (CAFRA) and many other women's organizations in the 1980s and 1990s, as well as in shaping academic-based community-oriented projects such as the survey on domestic violence in Guyana and the research on the Nariva wetlands in Trinidad around the turn of this century (Deare 1995; Peake 2009; Paddington and Hosein 2002, 2006). For framing this collection, we lean heavily on Halimah DeShong's understanding of the history of Caribbean feminist research as settling into three main categories: (a) research that is explicitly feminist in orientation, which arises from Caribbean struggles against the intersection of colonialism and its legacies, racism, heteropatriarchy, class inequalities and other forms of domination, and which seeks to create more just societies for Caribbean peoples; (b) research that takes Caribbean women as the main subject of enquiry and takes gendered relations of power as the principal focus, as well as concerns itself primarily with the empowerment of the category of women; and (c) research on Caribbean women and men using the categories of gender or sex, which is most commonly found in research on masculinity, HIV and other health matters, the family, and in policy studies, but occurs in the absence of knowledge about gender and sexuality as theoretical or analytical tools. The categories help to identify some of the specificity and differences between feminist, women's, and gender studies, even while we recognize that such categories are neither static nor discrete.

This special issue of the CRGS is particularly interested in the first category—Caribbean feminist research—and the way in which gender and sexualities are taken up within that approach. It presents perspectives of a range of Caribbean-based and diasporic researchers, and provides reflections upon and guidelines for conducting multi-disciplinary empirical feminist research, while offering contextualized examples from the English-speaking Caribbean. Because the editors and contributors of this issue recognize the virtual indivisibility of a discussion of methods from an interrogation of the process of knowledge production, we have anchored the discussion of methods, methodology and research experiences within the context of broader epistemological concerns. Thus, the articles also present interdisciplinary discussions of epistemology, methodology and methods from the social sciences and humanities, and include experiences of interviewing, the textual analysis of photographs, quantitative methods, archival research, and community-based research. This special issue consists of six essays and an interview, all original work by a small group of experienced and newer researchers. And while we know that much more exists that could be included, we hope it gives students, educators, trainers and researchers alike some idea of the possibilities and complexities involved in conducting Caribbean feminist research in the twenty-first century.

The special issue starts with an essay by Halimah DeShong about the role of reflexivity in feminist research today, drawing from her recent study of intimate partner violence using one-on-one in-depth qualitative interviews. She briefly considers how methodological issues are addressed in feminist empirical research in the Caribbean before presenting insights from her own experience of applying feminist methodological approaches in her study in St. Vincent. Reflexivity, she points out, is a necessary part of data-collection processes, and taking into account the researchers' own positionality in the process is critical to producing informed research outcomes. The essay raises a core feminist problematic of how to conduct research that neither dissolves the subject through postmodernist deconstruction nor presents itself as a positivist reflection of an objective reality, but rather is able to refract gendered experiences and relations of power that shape gendered lives through intersubjective, intertextual analyses that are socially and politically relevant.

The next two contributions provided by Angelique Nixon and Rosamond King and by Latoya Lazarus critically interrogate the role and place of diasporic researchers in conducting Caribbean research. In this regard, Nixon and King argue that embodied theories which focus on one's location and the ways in which the body is implicated in studies of sexuality are important points for reflecting on how this kind of research is produced in the region. Equally important are how these issues intersect with other social relations of power in the process of conducting research. In addition, they engage in a careful discussion of the potentiality of language to distance, obscure, misconstrue and misrepresent people's lives. While we accept that this is a concern for every research project, Nixon and King suggest that when conducting sexuality research, it is important to consider how individuals define their own actions, experiences and relationships. In sum, Nixon and King address the politics of publication, research as inherently political, and how embodied approaches can be applied to community organizing to transform the narrow discussions around sex and sexuality within Caribbean societies in general, and sexual minorities in particular.

In her essay, Latoya Lazarus confronts the ethical and epistemic issues associated with working with so-called marginalized and hidden populations in the region. She outlines not only the possible challenges that can be encountered, but also speaks to best practice that can be applied when engaging in this kind of research and, like Nixon and King, she focuses on research on sexuality in the region that has been conducted by diasporic researchers. In particular, she problematizes the insider/outsider subject position around a number of axes, including diasporic/regional situatedness, and national/Caribbean resident status. In so doing, she raises questions about claims to authenticity or "a monopoly on advantage or objectivity", which are relevant to the discussion of a number of other subject positions in the research process.

Bridget Brereton examines the work of historians of women and gender in the Caribbean who have utilized a range of sources, and provides rich detail about data collection methods from archives of official and unofficial records, oral history traditions, and visual and media sources. She discusses the shift from a focus on "women" to "gender" in the research, and argues that despite these shifts, historians have not necessarily introduced new methods, but rather, they have asked "new questions of the sources, read

them consistently against the grain and with critical (feminist eyes), chosen new areas for investigation, and insisted on different perspectives.” This, she says, has changed Caribbean historiography.

The use of photographic practices and technologies to excavate the experiences of Trinidadian women between 1860 and 1960 is the focus of the second essay on research in historical archives, by Roshini Kempadoo. She explores techniques and conceptual approaches to the research process that inform the textual analysis of the photographs. This, she says “necessarily involves an embodied awareness of the practice of research itself through a self-conscious and contested reflection of the materials and the places they are found such as the library or archive documented by creating written notes, audio and/or photographic recordings.” Roshini Kempadoo provides a theoretical approach in which to explore and analyse colonial photographs including references to photographic and screen-based texts, feminist approaches, historical perspectives and postcolonial positions.

In the final essay of the main section of this issue, Caroline Allen demonstrates how quantitative research, when approached from feminist perspectives, can provide powerful ways to reveal and highlight inequalities and to influence policy and action. In this way, its role in relation to qualitative methods is complementary, rather than contradictory. The essay details some standardized methods typical of quantitative methods and discusses the importance of sampling, drawing examples from research on public health issues in the region. She argues that when used appropriately, feminists in the region need not be sceptical about engaging in this kind of research.

In the section Gender Dialogues, we present an interview with Andaiye, in which she reflects on specific research projects of, and the meanings of research to, the Guyanese women’s organization Red Thread. She categorizes Red Thread research into three phases—activities at the first income-generating era of the organization, those that were initiated by external researchers in collaboration with the organization, and research formulated from within Red Thread itself and which strengthened women’s self-organizing. Of particular interest is the consciousness-raising that occurs, especially in the third phase, and the organic emergence of research methods that involve a sharing between women in the organization of different qualities, skills, insights and knowledge. A vibrant, empowered, politicized community of women is the result. The Red Thread story is one that can be told in a number of ways, and through this recent account by Andaiye, we are offered a glimpse into the ways in which knowledge gained through an unmediated relationship between action and research is part of a broader politics of social change.

It is undeniable that Caribbean feminists utilize a variety of methods in the production of social research. Regrettably, while we actively solicited essays on a wide range of research, only a small selection made it through to publication. Thus, although the diversity of methods used by feminists in the region are not fully represented here, we hope that this collection demonstrates some of the wealth of Caribbean feminist knowledge available to researchers, and provides an impetus to build a larger archive of

feminist reflections on research on gender and sexualities in the Caribbean and its diasporas.

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Feminist Reflexive Interviewing: Researching Violence against Women in St. Vincent and the Grenadines

Halimah A.F. DeShong

Abstract

For several decades, feminists have challenged approaches to generating knowledge within traditional social science research. Since the 1980s, feminist work on methodology and epistemology represents a significant contribution to the de-privileging of rationality and objectivity as the cornerstone to the study of social phenomena. Consequently, the idea of the detached, unbiased researcher has come under scrutiny, and it is now widely accepted that researchers bring their experiences and positionalities to bear on the research process. The process of conducting in-depth qualitative interviews typically facilitates an exploration of participants' understandings of reality and the situated meanings produced during this interaction. In this paper, I reflect on the process of applying feminist methodological approaches, particularly reflexivity, to data collected through in-depth interviews. The current work is based on interviews with Vincentian women and men on intimate partner violence (IPV) against women. Feminist researchers have long been concerned with generating reflexive knowledge; making visible the power dynamics and reducing the power differentials between researchers and research participants; the insider/outsider relationship; and the significance of gendered relations of power as a feature of social life. In other words, it is essential to consider our own biographies and biases even as we seek to make claims about the lives of those we study. These concerns guide my discussion of the in-depth interview method as a tool for conducting feminist research on violence against women in the Caribbean.

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Introduction

Over the past several decades, feminist methodologies have challenged the orthodoxy of traditional social science research in which the principles of rationality and objectivity are privileged and applied to the study of social phenomena. Consequently, the idea of the detached, unbiased researcher has come under scrutiny and it is now widely accepted that researchers bring their experiences and positionalities to bear on the research process. As a method of inquiry, qualitative research privileges those representations of reality included in texts, images, as well as verbal accounts. This article forms part of a broader effort to critically explore those knowledge creation enterprises in which feminists in the Caribbean have been engaged. Given the commitment among regional feminists to generating reflexive knowledge, there has been insufficient reflection on the extent to which this is achievable. This article represents my experience of using one-one-one in-depth qualitative interviews as a Caribbean feminist reflexive resource. I examine how this method of inquiry typically facilitates an exploration of participants' understandings of reality and the situated meanings produced during the interaction.

The studies to which I will refer can be understood as constituting three main categories: Caribbean feminist research (on gender and sexuality), research on Caribbean women, and research on Caribbean women and men from the perspective of gender. The first category comprises those empirical works which are explicitly (Caribbean) feminist in their orientation. Caribbean feminism exists at the intersections of struggles against colonialist, neo-colonial, racist, sexist, hetero-patriarchal, classist, and other discriminatory institutions and practices. Caribbean feminists¹ are particularly concerned about how these systems overdetermine the experiences of women, and more broadly speaking, how they can be contested in order to create more just societies.² It is a feminism birthed out of the socio-historical, political and cultural realities of the Caribbean, and while it has always been influenced by several global feminist movements and perspectives, it cannot be reduced to that which is an offshoot of Northern feminisms. The second category is best exemplified by the Women in the Caribbean Project (WICP) (Massiah 1986; Senior 1991) in which research on women in the region, for the first time, was approached from women's perspectives. WICP researchers never articulated an explicit feminist perspective at the time of the study. However, this research has since been acclaimed as a seminal contribution to Caribbean feminist knowledge production, given the landmark recovery work done to address women's multiple realities in the region. In addition, a number of studies have emerged which use gender to explain a range of social phenomena. Both Tracy Robinson (2011) and Tonya Haynes (2012) refer to postfeminist renderings of the concept 'gender', which is evident in academic and public discourses. The concept is often mobilised in sociological research on masculinity, studies of the family, policy studies for gender bureaus and various international agencies, and socio-medical studies on HIV and other health issues, without any reference to feminist theorising on gender as an analytical tool. In this article, I briefly consider how methodological issues are addressed in these studies before presenting personal insights from my own experience of applying feminist

methodological approaches to the study of intimate partner violence (IPV) against Vincentian women. The analysis for this article focuses on the interview experience.

The choice of in-depth interviews was based on my interest in understanding the meanings individuals attach to their experiences of violence and the ways in which the accounts of violence are sites in which gender is produced. Talk is a fundamental human activity that is systematised in research (DeVault and Gross 2007). However, in-depth interviews are not to be confused with everyday conversation. As a qualitative resource, in-depth interviews combine structure and flexibility in order to generate meanings from the perspectives of respondents (Legard, Keegan and Ward 2007). Topics to be covered are usually predetermined by the researcher; however, the stories which emerge are shaped by the interests of both the interviewee and the interviewer. These roles may shift over the course of the interview as participants seek to elicit information and ideas during the interaction. Feminist interviewing emphasises reciprocity and aims to be more reflexive and interactive, in order to avoid a hierarchical approach to research (Oakley 1993; Legard, Keegan and Ward 2007). In relation to the current work, participants were asked about their living arrangements, image of self, image of their partner, ideas about womanhood and manhood, their partners' ideas about womanhood and manhood, social networks, family network and routine, assessment of relationships, history of family violence, and violence in relationships. In this article, emphasis is placed on the co-construction of meaning during the interviews.

Feminist methodologies and Caribbean feminist/gender research

In its infancy, feminist methodologies challenged the orthodoxy of traditional positivist social science in which the natural science principle of objectivity and Western philosophy's preoccupation with rationality were applied to the study of human relations (Anderson 1995; Cook and Fonow 1986; Harding 1987 and 1991; Kirsch 1999). In this early period, feminists critiqued traditional social science, while also reflecting on sources and potentials of knowledge. It is worth noting that methodology specifies "how social investigation should be approached" (Ramazanoglu with Holland 2002, 11), or, as Harding (1987) suggests, it is both the theories and analyses of how research should proceed. It is the overall conception of the project and provides the rationale for applying particular techniques of investigation and analysis (Klein 1983). In other words, it is terrain where philosophy meets action (Sprague 2005); where questions of epistemology and method intersect (Jaggar 2008). The role of the researcher figures more prominently in Gloria Wekker's definition of methodology. For her, methodology "provides information about the various ways in which one locates oneself—psychologically, socially, linguistically, geographically, epistemologically, sexually—to be exposed to experience in culture" (Wekker 2006, 4). If we accept the commitment of contemporary practitioners to analysing the social relations of the research process, it becomes necessary to reflect on the manner in which our own positionalities determine the decisions taken in any research enterprise (Best 2003; Oakley 2000; Skinner, Hester and Malos 2005). Moreover, the process of documenting, analysing and (re)presenting the lives of others involves acknowledging our own social location as researchers and how this affects the kind of knowledge we produce.

The debate about whether there exists a distinctive feminist methodology was the subject of several books and journal articles throughout the 1980s and 1990s (Cancian 1992; Cook and Fonow 1986; Klein 1983; Harding 1987 and 1991; Oakley 1993 and 2000). It should be noted that there is no unified feminist methodology as feminists make claims from a range of ontological and epistemological locations. A fundamental aim within feminist methodological activities is to assess the strategies used for generating knowledge to determine their suitability for feminist research (Jaggar 2008). Notwithstanding these variations and the 1980s–1990s debates, there emerged some consensus on the key characteristics of feminist research. In general, there is a shared commitment to reconfigure current manifestations of gender inequality; reflexivity; consciousness-raising as a specific methodological tool, as well as a way of seeing; voicing women’s subjective experiences; ethical research practice; and the empowerment of women and the transformation of patriarchal relations (*see* Cook and Fonow 1986 and Jaggar 2008).

Regardless of the choice of methods, these principles feature across different feminist research projects. In addition, Skinner, Hester and Malos (2005, 18) note that these characteristics are not “solely the domain of feminist researchers [but] feminists have fundamentally influenced their use.” In this regard Kirsch (1999, 6-7) adds that

many feminist principles of research overlap, to some extent, principles central to new ethnographic, critical, and hermeneutic approaches to research . . . What distinguishes feminist research from other traditions of inquiry, then, is its deliberate focus on gender combined with an emphasis on emancipatory goals.

In researching violence against women in the Caribbean, I found the focus on gender, central to feminist methodologies, to be of particular import. These broad feminist principles informed my approach to the study of violence by providing a useful guide for conducting ethical fieldwork. Of course, the vagaries of fieldwork limit the extent to which some of these goals might be achieved. Take, for instance, the possibility of engaging in meaningful reciprocal consciousness-raising during an in-depth interview. This is virtually unattainable in a single sitting. However, Cook and Fonow (1986) submit that we should not judge “how feminist” a study is by counting how many of these principles are evident in the work. Instead, it is important to demonstrate how epistemological concerns are related to the research design, methods and analysis (Cook and Fonow 1989).

There are certain limits placed on authors who seek to present their empirical research in the form of peer-reviewed research articles and book chapters. In these fora, discussions of methodology are often reduced to descriptive narratives in which researchers report on the procedures undertaken during the data collection and analysis phase of their project, with less focus on how their choices shape the knowledge produced. In papers published about sexual violence in intimate relationships (2011), and narratives produced about gender (2012), I too presented procedures undertaken in the data collection and analysis stage, with very little discussion about the dynamics which influenced the choices made throughout the research process. Indeed, scholars are often constrained by word limits when publishing their work, as peer-reviewed papers and research reports are usually

produced to reflect the strict guidelines of those who commission these studies. It is also important to note that some of the earlier empirical studies of women in the Caribbean predated critical developments in feminist methodologies, especially if we consider that it was around about the 1980s–1990s that reflexivity became a crucial site of engagement for feminist social scientists. Within the region, there is now an emerging body of work which critically considers methodological issues from a range of disciplinary locations.³

Lucille Mathurin Mair's (2006, 235) path-breaking historical study of women in Jamaica ruptured the "orthodox historiography, which has been largely masculine and white". Mathurin Mair is described by Beckles and Shepherd as starting the process of writing Caribbean women into history. From a methodological standpoint, Mathurin Mair "decodes" the archival texts (Beckles and Shepherd 2006, xv) to uncover a range of gendered relations within which women were engaged between 1655 and 1844, and in so doing her work has become an important turning point in feminist historiography in the region. This work extends beyond writing women into history. From these records, Mathurin Mair interrogates how women were implicated in various relations of power under the systems of slavery, racism and colonialism, and how agency and resistance were indeed enacted as women navigated these processes. Shepherd (2002) identifies Mathurin Mair's pioneering work and the 1970s as key moments in which we begin to see women's lived experiences featured in the histories of the Caribbean. Through a range of archival research, oral history interviews and document analysis, the cultural and social history of women and gender in the Caribbean has been produced by a number of historians and sociologists, including Hilary Beckles (1989, 1999, and 2013), Patricia Mohammed (2002), Verene Shepherd (2002), Verene Shepherd, Bridget Brereton and Barbara Bailey (1995), Rhoda Reddock (1994) and Barbara Bush (1990). Mathurin Mair's historical method and focus serve as an important point of departure for those who succeeded her in the area of Caribbean historiography.

Similarly, the seminal study on Caribbean women, undertaken by the researchers of the Women in the Caribbean Project (WICP) some three and a half decades ago, represents, to date, the most comprehensive empirical data source on the myriad realities of women in the Commonwealth Caribbean. The empirical research generated from this study was eventually published in a two-volume special issue of the journal *Social and Economic Studies*, and the findings and analysis of the WICP also formed the basis of Olive Senior's *Working Miracles: Women's Lives in the English-Speaking Caribbean*. The main aim of the project, according to Joycelin Massiah (1986), was to examine the subjective meanings of women's social realities and to analyse how women's roles are affected by social change. Senior (1991, 1) describes the WICP as "the first to attempt woman-centred research, i.e. to involve women in defining their own reality." A mixed method approach generated substantial data on women in the following areas: work and women's dual roles, economic management of households, leadership and decision-making, sex-role identity and self-perception, and relationships with men (Anderson 1986). Both women and men were interviewed in the process of constructing knowledge about women's lives, although most of the interviewees were women. Particular reference is made to the collection of the detailed life-histories of 38 women. In-depth interviews were conducted with Jamaican women to analyse their kinship and friendship network; with Barbadian women experiencing poverty to determine their survival

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strategies; with rural women in Guyana; and with women from the Eastern Caribbean who were successful in their public lives. Massiah's overview of the project provided important explanations of the motives underpinning the choices made throughout the research process, whereas Senior provided a cursory glance at the study methodology. Massiah was careful to contextualise the overall research by providing in-depth justification for decisions taken at various stages of the project. Although it can be argued that there was little reflexive engagement in the presentation of the study methodology, it is worth reiterating that feminist scholarship on positioning the self in the research process did not emerge until the late 1980s and early 1990s.

In *Caribbean Women at the Crossroads: The Paradox of Motherhood Among Women of Barbados, St. Lucia and Dominica*, Patricia Mohammed and Althea Perkins (1999) briefly engage feminist methodological concerns as part of the research process. They present important evidence-based analysis on the social, economic and cultural factors which contribute to and often circumscribe women's decision-making capacity. In the opening chapter of this exploratory study, the research design and methodology are outlined. Mohammed and Perkins (1999) discuss methods for data collection which included a survey administered to 375 women and oral history interviews with 23 women, all drawn from the three countries. We learn that oral history interviews were examined against the data drawn from the questionnaires. Mention is made of the significance of feminist methodological considerations in the framing of the study, and this is reflected as they complicate the category "woman" by emphasising difference and heterogeneity within this grouping. Feminist methodologies explicitly guide the theoretical framework of the study and this is illustrated as the researchers explore a number of issues affecting Caribbean women in their different communities. It is undeniable that Mathurin Mair's historical research on women and gender (and that of her successors), the WICP, and the study by Mohammed and Perkins represent significant contributions to feminist empirical studies of Caribbean societies. Since the publications of these studies, feminists and other researchers, who adopt critical methodological approaches, have successfully shown that reflexivity in research serves to further legitimise our knowledge claims.

In addition, studies which focus on gender role socialisation in the family and issues related to fatherhood provide useful evidence-based discussions of Caribbean masculinity, race and the family (Barrow 1996; Brown et al. 1997; Roopnarine et al. 1997; Davies and Thomas 2006).⁴ Apart from Barry Chevannes' (2001) *Learning to be a Man*, in which he reflects on ethnographic research conducted across five Caribbean communities, most discussions tend to focus on methods and analytical procedures. A critical approach to research is outlined in the introduction to the study by Chevannes where he identifies the social and political context of data collection and analysis. In so doing, he acknowledges his role, as coordinator of the project, in ultimately shaping the ideas produced about these communities. It is important to note that the extent to which researchers engage in a reflexive dialogue on the research process may indeed be guided by their disciplinary background. So, for instance, individuals trained in the area of anthropology or those conducting ethnographies are more likely to engage in personal reflexions on the research process.⁵

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In general, research on women in the Caribbean, Caribbean feminist research and Caribbean research which investigates the lives of women and men from the perspective of gender have addressed key methodological issues. However, while reflexive practice might inform these studies, quite often researchers do not write about such actions in their published work. There are notable exceptions in this regard. In her essay “Freelancers, Temporary Wives and Beach-Boys: Researching Sex Work in the Caribbean”, Kamala Kempadoo (2001) presents insights on how sex work is constructed by male and female sex workers and sex tourists in the Caribbean. She reminds us that the approach to data collection undertaken in any research enterprise implies both a theory and method (Kempadoo 2004). Kempadoo (2001) documents her experience with Latin American and Caribbean feminists as they conducted research in which they sought to incorporate activism and public consciousness-raising around sex work. The group was particularly concerned about reducing the hierarchies inherent in the relationship between researchers and those from whom they sought to collect data. She writes the following:

Understanding prostitutes and other sex workers to be one set of actors in the sex trade—as providers of sexual labor—yet a social group whose lives and voices had commonly been dismissed or ignored, we were emphatic from the outset of the project that the perceptions and experiences of this population needed to be center stage . . . From discussions throughout the project and at the conclusion of the fieldwork period, the positionality of the researcher was considered important to the construction of knowledge about sex work in the region. In particular, ideas and specific biases held by researchers regarding female sexual agency were areas for reflection and discussion (Kempadoo 2001, 43-45).

Kempadoo describes a process in which the emphasis was placed on producing knowledge that was locally situated, reflected cultural and national understandings of sex work, and was part of a broader set of feminist discourses and practices in the Caribbean. Likewise, David Murray (2007) tells of how the various axes of his own identity produces a specific narrative on the socio-sexual experiences of “gay-identified” Barbadian men in the tourism industry before proceeding to discuss his findings.

Similar discussions of the research process can also be found in the works of Michelle Rowley (2002) and Gloria Wekker (2006), who espouse the value of critical reflexions on our methodological choices. Wekker lays bare the extent to which she (as researcher) is implicated in and thus shapes the kind of knowledge produced about Afro-Surinamese women’s sexual culture. She invites the researcher to be accountable and reflexive with regard to “the different modalities in which the self engages with others” (Wekker 2006, 4). In reflecting on her use of the oral history interview as an ethnographic practice, Wekker describes how the knowledge produced is shaped by both the participant’s self-perception and her own involvement as interviewer. Rowley (2002, 28) emphasises “the need to bridge the gap that exists between the conceptual and operational, the experiential and material”. In other words, language functions in two important ways. Firstly, it provides the basis upon which we move between the conceptualisation and

operationalisation of our research. Secondly, it is the medium through which experiences, ideas and feelings are (re)produced. It is not a question of the authenticity of the talk produced in interviews, but rather of how participants position themselves in that moment of co-construction which is always socially derived (Rowley 2002). These works illustrate the importance of viewing the interview as a “socially and linguistically complex situation” (Alvesson 2003, 14) in which the both the interviewer and respondent—not to be understood in clear dichotomous terms—participate in the creation of knowledge.

Researching violence against women in SVG: Positioning the personal

This article is based on research conducted as part of my doctoral study, the purpose of which was to explore the meanings individuals attach to the use and experience of violence against women in intimate heterosexual relations (DeShong 2010). Positioning the personal in the research process is now regarded as an important site for reflecting on how knowledge is produced (England 1994; Kirsch 1999; Macbeth 2001; Mauthner and Doucet 2003; Merriam et al. 2001; Wekker 2006). By positioning the personal, I refer directly to the effects of my choices as researcher, my personal values and my social location in shaping the knowledge produced about IPV against women in St. Vincent and the Grenadines (SVG). Personal reflexions afford researchers the opportunity to assess critically the implications of the knowledge claims emerging from empirical research. A researcher’s willingness to place her own actions and assumptions under scrutiny is a reminder that all knowledge is indeed political and embedded within particular relations of power. In this regard, I reflect on my role as a Vincentian woman researcher conducting feminist research on violence in SVG.

My personal assumption about violence in heterosexual unions at the beginning of the research process was that it is, for the most part, a form of violence against women perpetrated by men. This central belief was the result of my extensive readings of the empirical and theoretical work on IPV, as well as a multitude of media reports of women who had experienced serious and often fatal violence by male partners. Added to this was my own feminist politics, and these became instrumental in shaping the research questions and aims of the project. I set out to understand more about how ideas around power, privilege, and gender are so often tied to men’s violence against women and whether this was the case for a group of persons from my own country. More specifically, I wanted to understand the cultural ideas sustaining these beliefs and whether they were the same for those who experience and those who use violence.

Prior to embarking on fieldwork, I had already made choices about the theoretical orientation of the study and the kind of analytical framework to be used once data were collected. The study was guided by three central research questions:

What strategies do men and women employ in constructing their accounts of IPV? What can be gleaned from these accounts of women and men about how power is negotiated within intimate relationships? How are narratives of violence and control sites in which gendered identities are negotiated/performed/constructed by both women and men?(DeShong 2010, 19).

As a consequence of these key concerns, the study was located within feminist discursive frameworks and discourse analysis was chosen as a tool for examining the accounts produced during the interview. Elsewhere, I have discussed the suitability of discourse analysis as a feminist resource for exploring power, negotiations, dialogue, and subversion as these are enacted in speech (DeShong 2011, 2012). However, the purpose of this effort is to show how these choices guided my actions during the interviews.

Interviews

The interviews for this project were conducted over a period of about five months in 2007 and 2008. A total of 34 interviews were completed with 19 women and 15 men who were recruited from the Family Court, Family Services, a community police station and Her Majesty's Prisons. There were eight couples (current or former partners) interviewed within this group. In an attempt to secure informed consent, a description of the study was provided at the beginning of each interview. Participants were told that the information they offered would be confidential as I would not use their names nor any other details that could connect them to what we discussed. I explained the interviews would be recorded; they were informed that they could stop at any time during the interview; and I thanked respondents for agreeing to participate in the research. All participants were comfortable about continuing the interview, having been given this information at the beginning.

Because the formality involved in acquiring written consent from participants might have alienated some individuals (Miller and Bell 2005), I refrained from asking respondents to sign formal consent forms. The process of acquiring written consent could have been further complicated by the sensitive nature of the topic. The notion of "informed" consent is not without problems. Miller and Bell (2005, 65) asks, "What are participants consenting to when they agree to join a study?" That is why it was so important that participants were made aware of the range of issues that would be covered at the beginning of the interview so that they could decide whether they wished to proceed with the exercise.⁶ In addition, participants were provided with information about support networks should they require assistance in order to address the effects of violence in their lives. In most cases, persons contacted through the Family Courts and Family Services were quite *au fait* with available support systems and they constituted the majority of respondents.

Demographic data were collected at the beginning of the interview including information about age, ethnicity, level of education, marital status, religion, employment status and living arrangements; they were asked to provide the same general details about their partners. Interviews were completed within one sitting except in the case of one man who was called out to a job during the interview. However, this interview was completed one week later. Interviews lasted, on an average, between one and a half to two hours, except for the one interview that was done in two parts which lasted a total of three and a half hours. As one of the main methods of data collection in the social sciences, the in-depth interview is widely used by ethnographers, sociologists, psychologists, *inter alia*, who view personal accounts as central to the process of conducting social research. The

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appeal of the in-depth interview for feminist researchers, according to Shulamith Reinharz (1992, 19), is that it “offers researchers access to people’s ideas, thoughts, and memories in their own words rather than in the words of the researcher.” However, Gesa E. Kirsch (1999, 58) reminds us that the politics of interpretation and re-presentation is never unproblematic, so that even as we seek to include participants’ voices “researchers remain implicated in speaking for and about them.” Feminist researchers have long been concerned with generating reflexive knowledge; making visible the power dynamics and reducing the power differentials between researchers and research participants; the insider/outsider relationship; and the significance of gendered relations of power as a feature of social life. In other words, it is essential to consider our own biographies and biases even as we seek to make claims about the lives of those we study. These concerns guide my discussion of the in-depth interview method as a tool for conducting feminist research on violence against women in the Caribbean.

Though an interview schedule was used, the aim was to engage participants in a reflexive dialogue. A reflexive approach “operates with a framework that stimulates an interplay between producing interpretations and challenging them . . . It includes bridging the gap between epistemological concerns and methods” (Alvesson 2003, 14). However, I have found that discussions of reflexivity centre on the analysis rather than the collection of data and it is often difficult to determine how the feminist principle of reflexivity is achieved in the moment of the interview. Are researchers fully conscious of their ontological and epistemological purview at the time of doing the interview? And if so, how does this influence the interview dynamic? Similarly, how are the interview dynamic and research process influenced by the outlook of participants, as they narrate their world (Best 2003) of which we are only momentarily a part? These questions are taken up below as I discuss the experience of interviewing women and men about violence.

The making of violent accounts

Talking about the experience of violence in relationships is of course fraught with numerous challenges. For women who have been abused this often means returning to very traumatic experiences, a process which was quite difficult for several of the women interviewed. It was important to be able to assess and respond to participants’ reactions during the interview, to minimise the possibility for further harm. Respondents, generally, spoke at length about their feelings and experiences. The information given prompted me to probe for greater details on specific issues. In short, there was no slavish adherence to the interview schedule. There were, however, a few occasions where I intervened to steer the session in a particular direction, but for the most part, respondents were allowed to give direction to their accounts. I found that in most cases participants were willing to discuss various topics in the interviews. However, some men were less inclined to disclose details about the violence they perpetrated. This is similar to interviews conducted with men in other studies of violence against women (Dobash et al. 1998; Anderson and Umberson 2001; Boonzaier and de la Rey 2003 and 2004). With the exception of the tendency by most men to minimise their violent acts, respondents discussed topics with relative candour. This difference was even more pronounced with regard to sexual violence. Whereas several women reported that they were forced or coerced into sexual intercourse, men’s silence on sexual violence, as I have argued

elsewhere, might be regarded as strategic, deliberate and conspicuous by dint of these omissions (DeShong 2011).

Throughout the process I reflected on my position as a black, Caribbean, feminist, university-trained, former secondary school teacher, and Vincentian woman, with no experience of violent victimisation in an intimate relationship; both “insider and “outsider”. The notion of insider/outsider should not be read in clear dichotomous terms. Merriam et al. (2001) remind us that we can be regarded as both insiders and outsiders by research participants at various levels and stages of the research process. In other words, this may shift several times over the course of a single interview. They further suggest that “the reconstruing of insider/outsider status in terms of one’s positionality vis-à-vis race, class, gender, culture and other factors, offer[s] us better tools for understanding the dynamics of researching within and across one’s culture” (Merriam et al 2001, 405). In other words, it is not enough to focus on those aspects of my biography and experiences which connect me to or separate me from participants. Positionality, the power dynamics informing the research process, and the ways in which the emerging data are collected, analysed and represented are relevant points of reflexion (Merriam et al 2001). However, here, I focus exclusively on the interview exchange.

Returning to the transcripts, I found that there was greater variation in the co-construction of stories in my interviews with men. In general, women’s responses were more expansive. This is particularly evident in the talk about the nature and consequences of men’s violence. While women offered quite detailed statements about the motives, nature and effects of violence, men were more inclined to focus on rationalising their actions with far less attention to their use of violence. In addition, I found myself having to probe and challenge men to offer more details about their actions. Reflecting on her experience as a woman interviewing men about divorce, Terry Arendell (1997, 346) found her male respondents to be “preoccupied with the maintenance, repair, and self-assertion of their identities *as men*”. Similar to Arendell, I found that men mobilised traditional gender identities and sought to impose gender hierarchies during interviews. At times, men overtly positioned me as an outsider. This was the case in my interview with Andrew, a 25-year-old black male. The following is an extract from the interview:

Int.: In terms of when you were growing up, were there any quarrels or arguments in your family?

Andrew: My father fight, beat up plenty women.

Int.: You’ve seen that?

Andrew: Yeah.

Int.: And, like, why would he do that?

Andrew: Well, woman harden [*stubborn*] I now tell you, dread [*an expression of exasperation*], and they like to tell you plenty lies.

Int.: So because of that –

Andrew: [*He laughs*] Women is not to be trusted a certain amount of the times. It’s only like when on a level. Boy, I don’t like talk to you about women because you’re a woman.

Int.: So if a man was doing the interview would you have said more?

Andrew: Yeah, it makes a difference because you are a woman. I can’t

level [*reason*] with you because you is a woman. If it was a man, because you being a woman I can't just run down [*criticise*] women because you might think that a man would run you down the same way.

Int.: The thing is that all of us are shaped by our own circumstances and because of the things I experience in my life I would think a certain way and the things that you experience might make you think a different way –

Andrew: Woman harden man. I don't like to talk one time and two times. They just don't hear.

Int.: You mean like we're stubborn?

Andrew: If I talk to you one time [*mm hmm*] that is enough time. It means after that expect a lash.

Men in the study created a number of identity constructs for me which shaped the ways in which they narrated their accounts. In the above extract, Andrew reinforces a popular assumption which implies women and men are essentially different. There is an expectation that I would be critical of his actions because I am a woman, so at this point in the narrative, Andrew assumes a defensive posture. The identity marker that appears to be most salient in shaping this portion of his account is that of gender. Men's authority to discipline women's so-called recalcitrance is stated in a rather taken-for-granted manner. Using the term "harden" [*stubborn*] to describe women, he invokes the hetero-patriarchal expectation of women's deference to men. By mobilising the grouping "woman", rather than making specific reference to his partner, Andrew positions me within a category he has determined to be subordinate. My attempt to challenge Andrew's binary and hierarchical rendering of gender is dismissed and he simply reinforces his position about women's penchant for unsettling a normative gender order. In fact, as I attempt to articulate an alternative view, he simply cuts me off and insists that it is women who provoke men into violence.

Unlike Andrew who was hesitant to account for his use of violence, most men provided rather lengthy explanations for their acts of violence. However, as part of the process of impression management in the interviews, they used a number of strategies to distance themselves from the use of violence. They avoided the use of the first person in discussion of their actions. In the making of violent accounts, from men I learn that "she was hit", "she got a hard pound" and usually when the active voice was invoked it was to describe inherently non-violent selves—"I'm not really a violent person." In my view, stories are constructed in interviews in order to create certain impressions. Apart from the fact that violence against women is loathed within public discourses on the family, the act of creating non-violent selves in interviews may also be a result of an expectation that like the counsellors and other state officials with whom they have come into contact, I too may denounce their perpetration of violence. There is, of course, an awareness among participants that their actions and words are being evaluated, and this awareness shapes how they narrate their stories of violence.

Conversely, there were four men who offered specific details about their use of violence. However, a number of qualifiers were used in their accounts. As I listened to the tapes I wondered whether these qualifiers were a result of my non-verbal reactions to the graphic nature of what was being reported. After admitting to using the flat side of a machete to strike his partner, Scott stated that “I didn’t like abuse her that much.” Roger admitted to choking his partner, but explained that this was not to kill her but to restrain her since if he really wanted, he “could fuck her up”. All this he explained while performing the actions in the interviews. Unlike most men who described their use of violence as resulting from a loss of control, Roger presented his actions as calculated and controlled to achieve a particular effect. Most of the material that I had read prior to the interview spoke about the tendency by men, in general, to minimise violence, so it was with some surprise that I listened to these four men talk about their actions. This emphasised the varied ways in which people tell their stories. The details they provided called into question my expectation that men would always be silent about their use of violence. In their words and gestures, men ranged from invoking a taken-for-granted bravado to expressing emasculation and loss of control.

It was difficult to remain unmoved during the interviews. Questioning the idea that violence was the only choice for men who had “lost” control meant that at times I ran the risk of antagonising respondents. However, most men were wont to demonstrate that they had been forced into using violence. A feminist reflexive approach encourages the researcher to challenge stereotypical assumptions about gender and power. However, should this challenge be mounted during the interview or should this be incorporated into the analysis? I would suggest that there are subtle probes that can be used in this regard. I often asked men about the possibility of using non-violent conflict-resolution tactics and whether they felt responsibility for perpetrating violence. In the interest of maintaining rapport through the use of gestures such as the nodding of the head or the use of utterances such as “I understand” and “mm hmm”, we run the risk unwittingly of endorsing men’s violence. I was conscious of this possibility and sometimes found myself walking a fine line between finding ways to get men to talk about their violence, while at the same time ensuring that my actions did not convey support for these misogynous practices. In reviewing the transcripts, I observed no verbal interjections (on my part) while these four respondents discussed their specific acts of violence. However, from the structure of their accounts and the qualifiers provided, men may have been engaging in impression management and/or responding to my nonverbal facial and bodily reactions.

My anxiety about interviewing women was based mainly on the possibility that I might cause further harm to persons who are normally considered vulnerable given their exposure to violence. During the process of gaining access, a number of steps were taken to ensure that doing the interviews would in no way place women at any risk of experiencing violence. However, talking about violence can be distressing for those involved, especially for women who are the ones recalling the experiences. The formal interviewing process was suspended and the recorder turned off in a few instances when it became too difficult for some women to speak about their experiences.

Generally, interviews with women were longer, mainly because their responses were more detailed. Even though the transcripts reveal that respondents spoke at length, uninterrupted by follow-up questions in some instances, I was not a passive listener in these exchanges. Various non-lexical expressions encouraged participants to say more or to offer clarification. Through a number of probes and gestures women (like men) were sometimes encouraged to elaborate. Women were more inclined to offer details about the specific acts of violence they experienced, when compared to men providing insights into their perpetration of violence. For instance, I asked Linda about a particular attack by her former partner which caused her serious, almost fatal injuries. In a lengthy response Linda describes ending the relationship, making one of several police reports and then the attack. The following is an excerpt from the interview with Linda:

I called to the children to help me jam the door to stop him from coming in but they were so scared that everybody just froze, so he got the upper hand of us and started to push down the door. From the time he pushed down the door you hear Halimah, all I could receive is just chop like joke; left, right, centre, and all the chops coming now to my head, so actually I felt my skin in blood eh. (Linda)

This level of detail is not uncommon in women's recounting of violent events. In fact, all 19 women offered precise information about men's violence. In the interview with Linda, at times we spoke as if we had known each other for quite some time. The act of naming me as she describes this vicious attack demonstrates what Riessman (1987, 177) refers to as "an open display of the bond that is developing between interviewer and interviewee." In this regard, several participants made statements that indicated an expectation of shared knowledge between us as women. For instance, Rose was asked to describe her partner's reaction when she confronted him about intimacy with other women. She says "well you done know how man does get vex already." Likewise, Giselle responds to my question about her partner's social network by saying "you done know man already, man always get the most friends, maco friend, this friend, that friend." While Rose draws on conventional gendered beliefs about women's common experiences with men and men's tendency to act in similar ways, Giselle expresses annoyance at men's freedom to possess an extensive friendship network, a freedom not often shared by women in violent relationships. Her reference to his "maco⁷ friends" indicates that she is often under public surveillance, a theme which several women discussed in the interviews (DeShong 2013/2014). The use of the phrase "you done know man already [*you know what men are like*]" by both Giselle and Rose demonstrates how at times in these interviews I was accorded insider status on the basis of assumptions about my gendered experience and sexuality. Although Riessman agrees that such bonds during interviews are the result of supposedly shared gendered experiences, she is also careful to note that gender alone does not account for commonalities and difference.

Amy Best (2003) refers to the ways in which respondents translate their experience to ensure that their stories are heard in cases where there might be some perceived gulf between participants and the interviewer. Using her experience as a white woman

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interviewing Latina and black girls in the US about their high school prom, she demonstrates how race figures in the production of their stories. In particular, Best shows how the girls organise and reorganise their syntax to ensure that she understands them. According to Kempadoo (2001), while this outsider status offers a degree of anonymity which could make participants more inclined to tell their stories, having a complete outsider position, in relation to a particular cultural context, inhibits the researcher's ability to interpret their stories. My own experience is one in which persons used Vincentian Creole English that included local idioms, slangs and turns of phrase. This, I would argue, was the result of my audible Vincentian accent which indicated to respondents that I was a competent speaker of Vincentian Creole English. For example, Stacey, in response to my question about the number of friends her partner is known to have had, says "how he so ignorant, you hear tantie, me don't really look into him." "Ignorant" used in this context signifies "volatile"; "tantie", a term of endearment. These examples indicate that the positionality of the researcher, across a number of intersecting axes of power, does indeed shape how stories are told and how they are heard.

Sometimes women called into question the subordinate status that is so often associated with womanhood. I asked Rose about the first time that her partner used violence against her in the relationship

Int.: Could you tell me how the fight started then? What did each of you do?

Rose: It's words, words. He tell me something, and I tell he back something and he slap me, and I don't like it and we wrestle up.

Int.: So when he slapped you –

Rose: *I slap him back, yeah, I go take a slap* [participant's emphasis]?

In this exchange, Rose expresses surprise as I sought to ascertain what transpired. Reputation, an attribute usually associated with articulations of masculinity in the Caribbean, as elsewhere (see Peter Wilson 1969), is presented here as a salient aspect of her own identity construct. Wekker (2006) has argued that we should not assume that "reputation" is the preserve of masculine identity formation, since it is an equally important aspect of women's subjectivity, although the source of women's and men's reputation may in fact differ. Rose's swift response and inclusion of the rhetorical question conveys a sense of irritation that I would consider her reacting in any other way. Likewise, in my interview with Giselle, she explained that her partner was only able to overpower her during a violent episode because he used a weapon. These examples demonstrate the ways in which women subvert traditional gender norms in their narratives.

Power and reciprocity

Although the researcher has in mind the range of topics for which she wants to gather information and it is she who attempts to steer the discussion, the interview ought to be treated as a shared interaction. Participants offer explanations and information about their experiences and the interviewer should also provide responses to questions posed over the course of the interview. In her work on interviewing women, Ann Oakley

(1993) challenges the masculinist paradigm of the interview as a moment in which a subject—the “interviewer”—extracts information from the “object” of the interview—the participant—with the former actively avoiding offering a response to any questions raised by the latter in order to avoid introducing “bias” in research. Much feminist work has been done to demonstrate how this approach functions to objectify participants, while at the same time maintaining a hierarchical approach to research (Legard, Keegan and Ward 2007). Oakley (1993) notes that in conventional guidelines for conducting social science interviews, researchers have been advised to deflect attention away from questions raised by participants. However, in her own study of women’s transition to motherhood, she found that women asked several questions about this subject matter during the interview. Oakley suggests (1993, 48) that to regard participants as those who answer questions and interviewers as those who pose questions is “a purely exploitative attitude to interviewees as sources of data.” Though Oakley’s (1993) analysis was based on women interviewing women, her larger point about the need for reciprocity of information as a means of empowering participants and adhering to a feminist ethic of care should be considered, particularly when conducting research on sensitive issues. Since the publication of Oakley’s seminal work, feminist researchers have demonstrated that “through the judicious use of self-disclosure”, interviews are less exploitative with far greater analytical promise for the data produced (Harrison, MacGibbon and Morton 2001, 323). In situations where I was asked about my life and my experiences in interviews, I always provided a response based on my recollection at that time. However, I found that participants, both men and women, rarely posed questions to me about my personal life.

Participants mainly asked me to provide clarification about a question that I had asked. I always gave an answer in situations where a direct question was posed to me, and I found that this allowed me to maintain rapport with participants. While explaining his reasons for using violence, Andrew questioned me about my experience in my own relationships and expressed shock that I had never been hit by a partner. He asked whether I had ever been slapped by an intimate partner, to which I replied “no”. He was surprised and concluded that I had not been exposed to violence because I did not “give trouble” in my relationships. Once this was established, Andrew concluded that it was because I have never done anything to warrant a violent reaction. I was in that instance positioned as a good woman to whom particular stories could be told about his use of violence. He also appeared to be protecting men in general from possible vilification as he avoided offering much detail about his actions. He assumed that if he were to speak to me about his partner as he would to a man, it would affect the way in which I view all men. This initiated an explanation that was centred on the provocation motif in which men used their accounts to blame their partners for the violence men perpetrate.

The exercise of power in the researched-researcher relationship is a key area around which discussions of methodology have focused. Even though feminist researchers encourage reciprocity as a means through which we might reduce the power differential in the “researcher-researched” relationships, a review of my interview transcripts revealed that participants had a particular impression of what their roles ought to be. This is not surprising, according to Denzin (2001, 28), given the widespread use of interviews to “affirm the importance of the speaking subject and [to] celebrate the biographical”. It thus becomes the responsibility of “the reflexive interviewer [to] deconstruct [the] uses

and abuses of the interview” (Denzin 2001, 28). Participants operated as individuals from whom information was being sought. Apart from seeking clarification on my questions, persons also sort validation for their position as is evidenced by the use of phrases such as “you know” and “you understand”. Rarely did persons ask my opinion about the different topics covered in the interview. Oakley (1993) discusses reciprocity in a context where women saw her as a possible source of information about maternal health. However, this was not my experience. This may be the result of the difference in subject matter, their knowledge of sources of possible assistance, the fact that some women had managed to end their relationships, the strategies that they had employed to change their situation and their beliefs about my purpose for being there.

So what might be made of the power differential which exists between the interviewer and the respondent in the context of the interview? Davies and Dodd (2002, 281) suggest that ethical practice in research involves “the acknowledgement and location of the researcher in the research process.” It is necessary to consider my own social and personal characteristics, participants’ feelings about being interviewed and about the interview, my feelings about participants, the quality of the interviewer/interviewee interaction, and respondents’ attempts to use the interviewer as a source of information (Cook and Fonow 1986). I benefited from my official institutional affiliation which legitimated my intention in terms of access to interview participants. This, along with a perceived notion of physical⁸ and social distance (my “outsider” status) in many instances, might explain why individuals were rather forthcoming in interviews.

Although my own family background in SVG is one in which the lines between middle and working class are often quite blurred, I was well aware that my educational achievement (which is very well known in a small society) would have meant that I was most often positioned as privileged. This is in contrast to most participants who would be categorised as working class. The composition of research participants is, in part, indicative of those groups most likely to seek state assistance to end violence, and should not be confused with the diverse groups of people who actually perpetrate and experience violence in relationships. In addition, whereas I have witnessed various forms of violence, I have never been directly exposed to intimate partner violence. Although my gender and national identity overtly shaped the making of these stories of violence, the extent to which class functioned in these interviews was less evident.

My own experience/non-experience of violence may or may not have functioned as another axis of power in the interviews. Apart from witnessing several incidents of women being physically attacked by their partners during my upbringing, my interest in this subject does not stem from any other personal experience of relationship violence. As one of the most overt manifestations of gender inequality, the implications of violence for women’s well-being is of great concern. In a personal conversation with Kamala Kempadoo, she pressed me to think more about how our experience or non-experience of what we are researching can indeed shape the research process. In the interview with Andrew, for example, once he was made aware of my “non”-experience, I was positioned as a woman who understood her place and thus the stories which emerged were in part based on this supposition. A possible omission/shortcoming of the research is the non-disclosure of this aspect of my biography. Apart from Andrew’s, I am also unaware of

any possible assumptions that participants may have had about my own experience of intimate partner violence, and how these assumptions helped shape the outcome of interviews. The question raised by Kempadoo certainly merits further exploration.

There are a number of ways in which participants “subtly negotiate” power, according to Merriam et al. (2001, 413), as often they determine when (and sometimes where) the interview will be done, and how much information they share. Research is indeed a dialogic process, shaped by both researchers and participants (England 1994). I was completely reliant on the availability of participants and often interviews had to be rearranged. Some persons who had previously confirmed their participation withdrew at a later date. However, by characterising the research process as dialogic I do not wish to imply that the same degree of power was accessible to both participants and me. I chose the topics and questions to be addressed, but I also facilitated participants’ desire to speak to issues of importance to them and to elaborate on those areas they saw as most relevant to the various topics. In general, participants were prepared, from conversations prior to the interview, to be questioned about violence, so that, as previously stated, the overall pattern was one of participants responding to questions and statements.

Upon reflexion, it becomes apparent how, as researchers, we consciously and unconsciously orchestrate the actions that would unfold during the interview, and this occurs during the process of gaining access. Each person enters the interview with an often unstated working understanding of their anticipated roles. Even with ideas about reciprocity in mind my experience is that participants, once they had agreed to be interviewed, rarely unsettled these implied arrangements. This acquiescence, I would argue, can be explained as a result of the power dynamics within which the research process is embedded and, to a lesser extent, the participants’ desire to tell their stories.

Conclusion

There are a number of methodological and epistemic issues that must continue to concern feminists within the region. It is now widely accepted that treatment of identity relations should form part of the very work we do in producing knowledge (Riessman 1987; Arendell 1997; Kempadoo 2001; Alvesson 2003; Best 2003; Wekker 2006; Murray 2007; Jaggar 2008). My focus in this article has been to examine feminist reflexive praxis during interviews with Vincentian women and men about men’s violence in heterosexual relationships, and to consider how my subject position and that of the participants shaped the stories produced. Whereas I recognise that researchers’ experience in the interview setting varies according to the subject matter and a number of identity markers, one of the most significant findings for me with regard to the social organisation of talk is the extent to which participants performed the role of interviewee. With the exception of one respondent, whom I referred to as Andrew, and a few instances in other accounts, participants generally sought to provide answers to my questions and probes, only seeking clarification from time to time. Denzin (2001) reminds us that individuals are well aware that it is their stories that are meant to be told. The promise of engaging in feminist reflexive interviewing has to be read against how individuals understood their roles and how this awareness shaped the emergent narratives.

In general, the researcher-researched relationship is characterised by a number of factors related to the subject of the interview, social context within which the interview occurs and the biographies of those involved in the research enterprise. Men, more so than women, actively reasserted heteropatriarchal narratives and gender hierarchies in the interviews. This is similar to Arendell's (1997) experience as a woman interviewer interviewing American fathers about their divorce experiences. The tendency by most men (11 out of 15) in the study to avoid naming their specific acts of violence reflects an awareness that such acts are censured within public discourses. Instead, the choice to focus on their reasons for using violence can be seen as an attempt to manage the image produced about self in the interviews. In this regard, men often stated that they were not violent persons but instead lost control. Andrew's initial reluctance to provide an explanation for his and his father's violence exemplifies, in an overt way, how men often positioned me as outsider as they narrated the stories of violence. However, for those four men who named their specific acts of violence, they were wont to demonstrate that they were justified and, sometimes, in control of their actions. Traditional gender identities were often mobilised in the interviews with men. While I was careful that my actions in interviews with men did not betray a support for their violence, and I asked men to consider whether they could have done things differently, at times I felt curtailed in my ability to challenge men about their actions in more overt ways. Challenging traditional beliefs which support unequal relations of power is a key principle of feminist reflexive interviewing. At times I felt compelled to and offered another way of thinking about women in interviews with men. However, I sometimes resisted the urge to present alternative viewpoints since I wanted to ascertain from men the cultural assumptions informing their choice to use violence. The excerpt from my interview with Andrew points to the futility associated with trying to engage in meaningful consciousness-raising among men during a one-one-one in-depth interview. It also highlights a major limitation of engaging in feminist work as a graduate student with a very limited period of time apportioned to gather interview data.

The relationships that were formed in my interviews with women highlighted the extent to which women positioned me as an insider. This construction was often based on notions of shared ideas about and experiences with men. Whereas some men engaged in heteropatriarchal renderings of gender (which often meant that I was positioned as outsider), women used a number of verbal moves that demonstrated that I was, in some ways, insider to their experiences. However, this tendency by women to offer details about violence is not reducible to gender. As those most often victimised in these circumstances, women's greater inclination to tell their stories was not surprising, in spite of the possible social fallout that could occur. Women sometimes complicated the traditional assumptions about female subjectivity in their accounts. For instance, "reputation", so often associated with masculinity, embedded the accounts provided by some women. In addition, going into the field, I assumed that perceptions about my class positioning would have featured more prominently in the co-construction of accounts, but that was not the case. Gender and nationality were among the most significant axes of identity influencing how the stories were told. A shared national identity meant that persons were less inclined to translate their experiences during the interviews. It should be noted as well that the possibilities for transformative work among women is also

limited by a project with a fieldwork life of four to six months administered by a single researcher.

The in-depth qualitative interview is among the most significant of tools used by feminist and other researchers in our quest to make sense of a range of social phenomena. Given that a major aim of feminist methodology is to encourage the production of reflexive research, adopting this approach should engender a critical reflection on how our personal interests and experiences shape the knowledge we produce. Methodological issues continue to be given serious treatment in the work produced by feminists in the region. Although my focus here has been on the creation of stories in the interview, the analysis required in producing truly reflexive research should be considered an ongoing feature at various stages of any project.

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Email Correspondence

Haynes, Tonya. 2013. Email Correspondence with Halimah DeShong. September 18. (On file with author)

Personal Conversation

Kempadoo, Kamala conversation with Halimah A. F. DeShong. 3 May 2013.

¹ Kamala Kempadoo (2001 and 2013) uses the terms Caribbean feminist and feminist Caribbeanist. However, these are not used interchangeably. She uses the term Caribbean feminist to refer to scholars who have some national ties and/or who reside in the region and do feminist work. Feminist Caribbeanists do work on the region, but do not necessarily have any national ties and do not reside in the region.

² In an email exchange, Tonya Haynes reminded me that for feminists (in the Caribbean and elsewhere), these power relations are sometimes reproduced within feminist movements. Haynes offers a fine discussion of Caribbean feminism in her forthcoming essay "Approaching Caribbean Feminist Thought", which will be published in a collection entitled *Issues in Caribbean Research on Gender, Sexuality and Feminism: Interdisciplinary Approaches*.

³ For a closer look at some of these developments, see the 2013 collection by Barbara Lalla, Nicole Roberts, Elizabeth Walcott-Hackshaw and Valerie Youssef, *Methods in Caribbean Research: Literature, Discourse, Culture* and Erin B. Taylor's edited work, *Fieldwork Identities in the Caribbean*, published in 2010.

⁴ Though not discussed here, there are a number of socio-medical studies and research reports commissioned by Caribbean governments and international development agencies in which an understanding of gender is deployed to explain a range of issues affecting Caribbean people. Themes have included Gender and HIV, Domestic Violence and Caribbean Men and Masculinity/ies. These studies fall within the realm of what Tracy Robinson (2011) and Tonya Haynes (2012) have referred to as the post-feminist deployment of gender. One notable exception is a report prepared by Kamala Kempadoo with Andy Taitt (2006) on "Gender, Sexuality and Implications for HIV/AIDS in the Caribbean". Her report is informed by feminist work on gender and sexuality which threaded throughout the discussion.

⁵ I wish to thank Kamala Kempadoo for reminding me that reflexivity in research is central to the training of the anthropologist.

⁶ It would have been naïve of me to assume that some respondents might not have felt obligated to participate given the fact that the persons who assisted with recruitment (counsellors, social workers, and senior police and prison officers) were also individuals from whom they sought help, or from whom a recommendation about their actions was being made.

⁷ When used as a verb, the term "maco" refers to the act of spying on someone. In this context, Giselle uses the term as an adjective to describe someone who intentionally spies on another.

⁸ Although I was born and raised in SVG, I had spent several years living elsewhere. Participants were told that I was in the country for a brief period to conduct the interviews as part of my programme.



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Embodied Theories: Local Knowledge(s), Community Organizing, and Feminist Methodologies in Caribbean Sexuality Studies

Angelique V. Nixon and Rosamond S. King

Abstract

This essay is a collaborative project that interrogates the role of the diasporic researcher and writer around issues of sexuality/sexualities in the Caribbean in a way that also describes methodologies useful to anyone working in this field. We outline and address the significance of feminist methodologies in Caribbean sexuality studies through embodied theories that encompass the importance of community organizing and attention to the local. We will identify various theories and languages that offer insights into the experiences and multiplicities of identity in terms of gender and sexuality and their intersections with race, class, and religion. This project troubles the divide between academia and community and demonstrates the myriad ways our theorizing must bridge this gap. We engage the work we both have done with the Caribbean International Resource Network in terms of marginalized populations, oral histories, building digital archives, and community organizing (local, regional, and diaspora). We address the following questions: how and where do we disseminate information about marginalized Caribbean sexual minority communities? Do this information, research, and data benefit these communities? How do gender and sexuality intersect with race, class, and religion for Caribbean sexual minorities? What have been some of the successes of community organizing in the region and what impact has this had, or not, on academic research and methodologies related to Caribbean sexuality studies? Overall, this project will assert the importance of feminist methodologies that are embodied theories and grounded in local knowledge and community building.

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Introduction

This collaborative project outlines and addresses the significance of feminist methodologies in Caribbean sexuality studies through embodied theories that encompass the importance of community organizing and attention to the local. We will identify various theories and languages that offer insights into the experiences and multiplicities of identity in terms of gender and sexuality and their intersections with race, class, and religion. This project troubles the divide between academia and community and demonstrates the myriad ways our theorizing can bridge this gap. We consider feminist theories at the core of feminist methodologies; hence, we offer the concept of embodied theories as a feminist methodology that privileges the local, community organizing, and different forms of knowledge. As writers and scholars, we will engage the work we both have done with the Caribbean International Resource Network (Caribbean IRN) in terms of marginalized populations, oral histories, digital archives, and local, regional, and diaspora community organizing. We wonder, like our colleagues, “How can we deploy power creatively and consciously in the service of radical justice? And how effective are these strategies for bringing about individual and social change?” (Rodriguez 2003, 46) We assume all research activity—what we read, choose to study, and write about, and what and how we publish and teach—is political. We also assume that researchers strive to be not only ethical and responsible to their own ideas, but also to the people or material that is being studied. Therefore, we prioritize the local and community needs and different ways of knowing, particularly with regard to the study of Caribbean sexuality inside the region. This essay itself utilizes some of the same methods it proposes. One principal example of this is its collaborative nature: two humanities scholars present this essay, both of us committed to interdisciplinary research and active in creative, community, and analytical work beyond the academy, and both of us engaged as diasporic researchers and writers. While we do not wish to perpetuate “the mistaken notion that only one kind of justice work could lead to freedom,” we put forward the following ideas as one set of ways to approach Caribbean sexualities research, one possible way to freedom (Alexander 2005, 281).

The role of the diasporic researcher

Places such as New York City, Montreal, and Miami are real and legitimate Caribbean sites because of population and cultural presence, as well as long histories of migration and transnational flows. Nevertheless, the role of the diasporic researcher is more fraught than many of us often admit.¹ We identify as Caribbean (with or without an additional, hyphenated marker), and yet we spend the majority of our time outside of the region. This physical distance does not always mean we know less about the region than those who live there, but it does mean that we know *differently*. Diasporic researchers should acknowledge those differences, which can lead to particular perspectives and insights. This type of acknowledgement can also spur the diasporic researcher to consult local archives and to collaborate with local scholars, community-based researchers, and other experts in meaningful ways. At the same time, location outside of the region means that we often have more access to resources. The greater access to resources means a greater responsibility to try to share resources and results within the region—an important part of the methodologies we propose in this essay. In other words, as Caribbean diasporic researchers and writers, we acknowledge our subject positions within our research and theories as fundamental to what we define as embodied theories that affirm the place of

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local knowledge(s) and community organizing. These concepts are evident in Caribbean feminist theorizing and practice—attention to the local and regional. But how do these feminist methodologies translate into Caribbean sexuality studies? What is the relationship between Caribbean feminism, feminist practice, and sexuality studies?

Significance of feminist methodologies in Caribbean sexuality studies

Caribbean sexuality studies have in many ways emerged through the established field of Caribbean feminist theory. Feminist methodologies in Caribbean studies necessarily assert the importance of focusing on regional and local histories/herstories in practice and theory. As Patricia Mohammed asserts in her article “Indigenous Feminist Theorizing in the Caribbean,” “feminism as an expression of sexual equality must be itself historically located, despite the global discourse which feeds its growth” (Mohammed 1998, 7). Therefore, as we engage the significance of feminist methodologies in Caribbean sexuality studies, we must consider and define some of the practices of feminism in the Caribbean. The Caribbean feminist movement and women’s organizing for sexual equality can be seen in part through the publications by the Institute for Gender and Development Studies (IGDS) at The University of the West Indies (in Jamaica, Trinidad, and Barbados). Significant collections from these centers include *Gender in Caribbean Development* (1991), *Stories in Caribbean Feminism* (1998), *Gendered Realities: Essays in Caribbean Feminist Thought* (2002), *Gender in the 21st Century: Caribbean Perspectives, Visions and Possibilities* (2004), and more recently with the new journal *Caribbean Review of Gender Studies*. Caribbean feminism and community organizing can also be seen more explicitly through organizations such as CAFRA (Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action) and CODE RED for Gender Justice.

CAFRA positions itself as an organization committed to fighting oppression: it “is a regional network of feminists, individual researchers, activists and women’s organisations that define feminist politics as a matter of both consciousness and action. We are committed to understanding the relationship between the oppression of women and other forms of oppression in the society, and we are working actively for change.”ⁱⁱ CAFRA frames feminism within the Caribbean context as being both consciousness and action, that is, engaged praxis—and feminist politics are grounded in the practical and intersectional analysis of oppression. However, in practice, sociopolitical issues in the Caribbean (as with much of the Global South) concerning women tend to be addressed through the topic of “gender and development” or through women’s organizations that may or may not support feminist consciousness. But CAFRA, along with other activist groups, is committed to feminist praxis *and* feminist thought within the region, building solidarity and connections that embrace different Caribbean women’s experiences. They fulfill their mission through various conferences, community workshops, publications, political actions, and community organizing, establishing cross-cultural and regional relationships. Further and more recently, the vibrant online and social media presence of the feminist activist collective CODE RED for Gender Justice has expanded the work of CAFRA through insightful and engaging conversations about gender and sexuality issues in the region.ⁱⁱⁱ Graduate students at IGDS, at Cave Hill in Barbados, formed this collective, which has grown to include Caribbean feminists around the region and diaspora. They have engaged in a number of exciting activities and projects, including annual symposiums, workshops, and online campaigns; they also initiated the young

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feminist network called CatchAFyah. CODE RED uses a variety of approaches in its work that reflects the dynamic work of feminist activists, organizers, and scholars inside and outside the region. Hence, we can understand the work of Caribbean feminist academics and organizers with an intersectional multidisciplinary praxis whose methodologies are deeply invested in local actions and what we would argue are (local) embodied theories.

Caribbean feminist scholars also engage the practice of feminism grounded in the local even as they theorize about and debate definitions of Caribbean feminism and reveal its distance from Western notions of feminism. The special issue of *Feminist Review* in the summer of 1998 titled “Rethinking Caribbean Difference,” edited by Mohammed, represents an overview of activism and scholarship in Caribbean feminism. This issue includes articles by prominent Caribbean scholars who do work on gender, feminism, and women’s issues in the Caribbean, among them Rhoda Reddock, Hilary McD. Beckles, Bridget Brereton, Linden Lewis, and Eudine Barriteau; they cover the region while also discussing the specifics of Puerto Rico, the Netherlands Antilles, Haiti, Jamaica, Trinidad, Barbados, and Cuba. Mohammed’s much cited “Towards Indigenous Feminist Theorizing in the Caribbean” is a seminal essay that seeks to define feminism and feminist theory in the region through engagement with the politics of history and the complexity of Caribbean identity. She begins by explaining the region’s (and by extension the field of Caribbean studies’) necessary preoccupation with the past and ethnic identity as rooted in the sordid and brutal history of colonialism, which disrupted and eradicated much of the cultural memory of the indigenous Amerindian population and African peoples (Mohammed 1998, 7). In considering how ethnicity has political appeal that elides gender and sexual difference, Mohammed asserts the following:

Recognizing the different ways in which men and women within any cultural group experience enslavement, indentureship or migration is integral to understanding ethnic identity. The psychological scars of emasculation or defeminisation caused by such uprooting are not skin deep and have residual effects on gender relations and gender struggles within a society far beyond the periods of disruption (1998, 8).

In other words, she argues that the construction of masculinity and femininity during colonization continues to affect present relationships for all races and classes of people in the Caribbean. Thus, feminism in the Caribbean has been engaged with these constructions of “manhood” and “womanhood” while being affected by the struggle for gender equality in the larger global discourse. Mohammed’s project then seeks to theorize and interrogate gender identities inside the region, while deconstructing difference in an effort to support a feminist movement that is historically progressive and committed to changing consciousness, policies, and programs. Mohammed’s redefining of feminism is firmly grounded in Caribbean gendered experiences and histories while also reflecting a liberatory approach to the struggle of ending systems of oppression and domination.

An overview of feminist methodologies can provide us with a sense of how these resonate for the study of Caribbean sexualities. It is important to trace these relationships and investigations of gender, in part because they offer us a glimpse into both the silences and possibilities around the study of sexualities, same-sex desire, and sexual minorities in the region. The present collaborative project seeks to respond to the following question: how do feminist methodologies address issues of gender identity and sexuality, or do they? On the one hand, to be grounded in the local we must affirm the place of indigenous theorizing of feminist methods; on the other hand, if these grounded theories do not account for historically overlooked silences or possibilities, then we must borrow from other theoretical traditions or look more deeply at a range of Caribbean epistemologies. It is perhaps in this looking harder, or rather looking differently, that we will discover what we are calling “embodied theories” for the study of Caribbean sexualities. These theories can be grounded in feminist methodologies that utilize both social science and humanities approaches. Furthermore, they ought to engage the everyday experiences of sexual minorities, and offer tools and ways of examining sexualities (including same-sex desire) in the realm of culture and cultural production, where we may find multiple ways of knowing. In addition, feminist methodologies that are useful for Caribbean sexuality studies must incorporate not only specific local historical contexts, but also the intersections of race, class, and religion with gender and sexuality.

Women of color feminists have offered many theoretical and practical spaces for the understanding and analysis of these intersections, through the framework known as intersectionality. Chandra Mohanty asserts that there is a need for feminist analysis to recognize not only the importance of rewriting history, but also that such “practice of remembering and rewriting leads to the formation of politicized consciousness and self-identity” (2003, 78). Similarly, in “Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference,” Audre Lorde argues that members of marginalized groups must create new patterns of understanding difference in order to build coalitions and fight against racism, sexism, ageism, heterosexism, and elitism (1984, 115). Lorde explains that we must be wary of ignoring and misnaming difference; thus, within the struggle for revolutionary change and liberation, we must define ourselves outside oppressive structures. For example, people who are marginalized must take charge of knowledge production—we must do the work of redefining ourselves, asserting subjectivity, and resisting dominant and oppressive structures. Lorde’s work exemplifies intersectionality and offers a pragmatic framework in which to organize around difference and against violence.

More specifically in her essay “Sexism: An American Disease in Blackface,” Lorde discusses the multiple forms of violence that affect Black communities in the United States, specifically forms that emerge from sexism, racism, and homophobia. She argues that until we see those interconnections and build a consciousness and dialogue about them, “the continued blindness between us can only serve the oppressive system within which we live” (Lorde 1984, 64). While the context for the essay is the United States, her analysis is useful for other communities of color and postcolonial societies. In

particular, her words resonate as we think about the Caribbean context and the intersections of race, gender, class, and sexuality. The Caribbean still exhibits “the systematic devaluation” and economic, political, and social marginalization of Black women and other women of color. Lorde argues that we cannot accept some forms of violence and condemn others. In other words, we cannot fight against domestic violence and sexual abuse and do nothing about homophobia. Lorde’s work exemplifies the practical workings of feminist theories and methodologies that take into account the body and lived experiences.

Key aspects of embodied theories

The acknowledgement of one’s own location is a fundamental aspect of embodied theories, an approach that is particularly relevant in sexuality studies, which are necessarily preoccupied with bodies. An embodied theory is a theory that does not ignore the reality of bodies—either of the people being studied or of those doing the analysis. We too often, for instance, talk about sex without any mention of pleasure, as is clear in the heavily used term “MSM (men who have sex with men),” which privileges global north epistemologies, HIV/AIDS work, and the international non-governmental funding complex over local language and ways of knowing. Embodied theories pay particular attention to the material reality of the body—how the body’s need for sustenance and safety can drive the decisions of everyone in every sector of a society. Most scholars are accustomed to discussing gender and sexuality together and in relationship to particular social groups, but not necessarily in conjunction with other factors. If we examine sexuality without attention to color, race, class, rural or urban location, and other aspects of identity, then we are quite literally not considering the *whole* person, and these omissions will diminish our research and its results.

This attention to the material body also needs to be applied in some degree to scholars ourselves. We should ask ourselves: What is the physical location of my body? How does the body I live in affect my perception of Caribbean sexualities? And for those who engage in field work, how do my apparent color, phenotype, and gender affect my interaction with subjects? The authors of this essay are often struck by how gleefully some white, North American scholars describe how they decided to study the Caribbean after a vacation, after experiencing carnival, or after sleeping with a Caribbean person. But these experiences are rarely included in their publications. Other scholars, though, do address this issue, some including autoethnography in their scholarship, as Carlos Decena and Gloria Wekker do. Wekker argues “if you are transparent about the ways in which you position yourself, including the sexual positions you occupy, then you produce better knowledge” (2009, 3). By proposing the importance of embodied theories, we encourage the production of knowledge that reveals and takes into account the material body. Yet such work should also account for the emotional body—that of ourselves as diasporic researchers and those of the people we are studying, writing about, and theorizing around. Embodied theories inherently suggest an embrace of the material *and* emotional body, and an acknowledgement of what that means for both the (diasporic) researcher and the subjects of study.

It would be naïve, however, not to point out that such disclosures can more negatively affect junior scholars and those who are women, and/or people of color, and/or not

heterosexual, and/or not located in the global north. But even if scholars choose not to disclose intimate knowledge of their bodies, we can still be aware of how that information affects our methods and analyses. And we must at least consider the ramifications of absenting the researcher's body from the written record when often our bodies are implicated during every stage of research (i.e., what we study, how we study, why we study, and how we write). We must also acknowledge that our research can have an impact not only on our own bodies, but also on the bodies of our subjects. In many ways, incorporating these considerations is a more honest approach to the work we do—avoiding the supposed but never achieved “objective” gaze that too often is or is assumed to be European, white, and male. This essay builds on the archive of feminist postcolonial theories and methodologies that have proposed and incorporated such practices.

Another aspect of embodied theories is taking different kinds of theories and discourses seriously. As Omise'eke Natasha Tinsley suggests, “while it is of paramount importance that we have theorists who engage with, deconstruct, and reconstruct now canonical cultural and gender theory, a real restructuring of postcolonial and sexuality studies will only take place when the academy *listens to other kinds of theorists*” (2010, 28). There is much work still to be done regarding how folk wisdom, subaltern cultures, and Caribbean traditions understand, describe, and theorize sexuality. Given that Caribbean cultures have survived slavery, indentureship, colonialism (in its original, as well as post and neo forms), globalization, and cultural imperialism, surely these “subordinated knowledges” are worth considering as legitimate epistemologies (Alexander 2005, 7). By treating methodologies as “conscious engagements with knowledge production,” we can expand the content of our knowledge while also making it more reflective of the Caribbean region (Rodriguez 2003, 161). In other words, we can understand this kind of knowledge production in conjunction with an awareness of the body and of local and regional contexts. As was mentioned briefly at the start of this essay, sexuality scholars (with the general exception of psychologists) are far more likely to describe and analyze what our bodies do rather than how we feel. Careful attention to feelings and the body can help researchers avoid one-dimensional portraits of Caribbean people and phenomena that often portray people as victims of circumstance who cannot feel pleasure, and/or as exotic others who are always ready or available for sex and pleasure.

Theorizing and accounting for the Caribbean sexual subject, including sexual minorities, must also factor in the ways in which colonialism, neocolonialism, globalization, tourism, and cultural appropriation affect conceptions and understandings of self and sexuality. Kamala Kempadoo argues in her book *Sexing the Caribbean* that we must begin to explore the complexity of Caribbean sexuality by coming to terms with its diversity: She proposes that “we need a different lens for thinking about Caribbean sexuality—that we cannot simply view it as a fabrication of the European mind and imagination, or dismiss it as colonial discourses or metaphors, but need also to view hypersexuality as a lived reality that pulses through the Caribbean body” (2004, 1). If we take seriously Kempadoo's argument here, then we must account for the body, for pleasure, for lived experience, for what is happening on the ground and in between/among actual people.

We must account for the daily and “embodied sexual practices, identities, knowledges, and strategies of resistance of the colonized and postcolonial subject without lapsing into notions of an essential native sexuality” (ibid., 2). Kempadoo proposes that “colonial and neocolonial ideas about the region have combined with West African, East Indian, Amerindian, and other non-Western traditions and legacies,” which have created a variety of sexual arrangements and practices that comprise Caribbean sexuality (ibid.). These include multiple partnering, serial monogamy, informal polygamy, same-sex and bisexual relationships, and various types of transactional sexual relationships. The Caribbean sexual landscape consists of complicated and non-normative relationships and different sexual expressions that often contradict the national consciousness of much of the region, and the accompanying dominant (mostly) Christian conservative and pious conceptions of the region that are often posited as the Caribbean way. The region is (simply put) wrapped up in a politics of respectability, not only through dominant religions but also through the remnants of colonial structures of social and cultural norms.

Kempadoo acknowledges that dominant constructions of sexuality (of course) exist across the region, and she asserts hypersexuality and heteropatriarchy as two defining concepts of Caribbean-ness. Hypersexuality is a concept that explains the representation and framing of the region as overly sexual (i.e., paradise, exotic, primitive, other, etc.), and heteropatriarchy describes the privileging of male experiences within the dominant heterosexual structure, which delegitimizes women as well as non-normative sexualities and genders. “In this structure (heteropatriarchy), coupled with a discourse of hypersexuality, lesbians, gays, transgenders, prostitutes, and other ‘sexual deviants’ are cast not only as oversexed Caribbean subjects but as outlaws and noncitizens” (ibid.). Nevertheless, Caribbean sexual minorities—sometimes named as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, or queer, and other so-called sexual deviants—live and exist in the region. And if one pays particular attention to the community organizing within the region, we can begin to see the ways that people have challenged normative relationships, fought for change, and written their “outlaw selves” into citizenship.

The issue of language

When the issue of language(s) is raised in Caribbean studies, the obvious concern is the monolingual nature of most of our work. This reality reflects the difficulty of attending to the many similarities and the many differences among territories speaking variants of Spanish, English, French, and the oft-forgotten Dutch. The thoughtful work of scholars such as Omise'eke Natasha Tinsley and Kamala Kempadoo serve as models of multilingual research and analysis of Caribbean sexualities. In addition to this serious issue, there are other language concerns particular to Caribbean sexuality studies. Foremost among them is not to take seemingly benign terms—such as *woman*, *man*, and *prostitution*—for granted. Much work has been done, from Sojourner Truth to Toni Cade Bambara and Judith Butler, and specifically in Caribbean studies by Tinsley, to question the term “woman” and how it functions in relationship to people of different races, classes, and times.^{iv} Reading and citing this body of work, and taking the questioning of “basic” and “obvious” terms seriously will enrich analysis. Similarly, we should avoid the use of “victim language,” language that makes people into objects rather than subjects. Examples of problematic language include “victims of AIDS,” and “victims of sexual abuse”; alternatives include “people with AIDS” and “survivors of

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sexual abuse.” This kind of attention to language is directly linked to our desire to affirm individual agency and acknowledge people’s humanity and feelings as complex beings. Furthermore, researchers must know the origins and context of terms. A clear example is the use of queer, LGBT, and MSM to refer to people who use very different terms to define themselves. At best, such labels are inaccurate; at worst, they enact an epistemic violence upon Caribbean subjects by denying their own agency to name and define (or not name *or* define) themselves and/or their behavior. While the use of terms such as *gay* and *prostitution* may seem to make sense, they actually invoke particular places, histories, and circumstances. It is important to consider how people name themselves and describe their own behavior, as well as expressions found in regionally specific language. If researchers insist on using terms such as *gay* and *prostitution* rather than less geopolitically based—and potentially more accurate—terms such as *sexual minority* and *sex work*, then we must acknowledge the histories of those terms and explain why they are appropriate. Similarly, when we use local Caribbean terms, we must do so accurately, consistently, and in appropriate contexts. Simple translations (e.g., masisi=faggot, friending=prostitution, pato=queer, mati=lesbian, or manroyal=dyke^v) are far less useful than detailed explanations of how and when a particular term is used. Lawrence La Fountain-Stokes’ use and transformation of the term *loca* is a good example of appropriate, creative, and analytical employment of a local term. *Loca* in Spanish literally means “mad woman” but in the Puerto Rican context *loca* “in its slang derivation, means queer, perhaps something akin to queen” that can have both derogatory and endearing connotations generally used to describe feminine men (La Fountain-Stokes, 2011).

Just as we advocate for the inclusion and analysis of different types of theories, we should also have a more expansive attitude toward language. For instance, use of language of and about the sacred is, in non-theological academia, in its nascent stage.^{vi} Similarly, the “language” of cultural products such as music, carnival, sport, and child-rearing practices “provide important insights that may not be gleaned from statistical data,” which can be even more useful when such data are not available (La Fountain-Stokes 2009, xiii). Additionally, the collection and study of oral histories/herstories within Caribbean sexuality studies offers additional ways of knowing and understanding the landscape of sexuality in the region and its diaspora.

Disseminating research

How and where we scholars disseminate our research has a direct effect on the field of Caribbean studies as a whole, which depends, as does any academic field, on researchers reading, responding to, and building on each other’s work. A variety of scholarly formats beyond the printed, peer-reviewed journal now exist, even though that format remains the standard for tenure decisions in North American colleges and universities. As two untenured faculty members, we are deeply empathetic to this situation (as we both work towards tenure). And yet we remain convinced that publishing beyond the traditional route is more a sense of responsibility than option, and can contribute to both community building and activism, while coexisting with various tenure requirements.

A number of Caribbean-oriented, peer-reviewed journals exist, including *Small Axe*, the *Journal of West Indian Literature*, the *Journal of Caribbean Literatures*, and *Sargasso*.

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There are also several electronic, peer-reviewed journals, including, the *Caribbean Review of Gender Studies*. These are respected journals that publish cutting-edge work. Other publishing options include non-academic venues such as blogs, Caribbean newspapers, and online resources such as the Caribbean IRN's online collection. While some of these publications are less likely to be considered strong contributions to a tenure dossier, many have readerships that are broader than those of academic journals and reach a very different audience. Both the prestige-conscious and those who lack job security should consider publishing their work in a peer-reviewed print journal, and then publishing a shorter, or longer, or slightly differently focused essay in another venue. If interviews have been conducted as part of the research, these can be published separately. As scholars and creative writers, we have pursued all these avenues. We have also sent PDFs of published papers directly to Caribbean colleagues and community groups in an effort to make our research more accessible within the region.

We must begin broadening the academy's notion of "important" publications, and begin "valorizing diverse publications as valid sites for the dissemination of knowledge," even as we continue to publish beyond its boundaries (Parés et al. 2007). Asking libraries to subscribe to Caribbean-based journals (and to buy books from UWI Press, Ian Randle Publishers, and other Caribbean-based publishing houses), engaging colleagues about the quality of electronic journals, and extolling these publications when writing recommendations or tenure evaluations for junior colleagues are all ways that we can change the academy from within. In addition, we urge emerging scholars to consider non-print venues, such as radio interviews and talks to a variety of audiences, especially beyond the university. Further, we can ask conferences to webcast lectures and panels so that they are more accessible to people in the region. As Juana María Rodríguez reminds us, "Discursive spaces need not be institutional, however; the chatroom, the bar, the street corner, the computer screen also serve to define subjects and construct knowledge practices" (Rodríguez 2003, 6). The issue of dissemination is vital, because one way research can benefit Caribbean communities is by *reaching and engaging* those communities as equals; this is a key way to take seriously the lives and experiences we are writing about and studying. This issue is connected to how scholars interact with and how our work affects Caribbean communities.

Obviously, the question of whether information benefits Caribbean communities depends both on the research and the researcher. The clear solution is to ask people in the relevant communities. Though this may not be as easy as it sounds, it is not particularly difficult. Communication with non-academic stakeholders of our work (and academics in different regions) can take place at every stage of the research process, from conceptualization to analysis to publication. Such communication might consist of asking activists what research questions they would like answered or asking stakeholders to comment on publication drafts. "Benefit" also has a broad range of meanings. Benefit can be the legitimization of an identity, strategy, or organization. It can also mean physical materials, data, information technology, and/or labor provided to a community. Traditions of engaged scholarship provide a number of similar approaches to conducting research in a respectful, responsible, and responsive manner, rather than "hit and run" work that benefits the scholar's career but is not made available to any non-academic

community. In other words, research, data, oral histories/herstories, collected archives, and interviews ought to be readily accessible to the community they are about and from.

Local knowledges and community organizing

We must turn to the realities of Caribbean sexual minority community organizing to investigate and interrogate the possibilities and successes of how diasporic researchers make “selves” and bodies legible, written, and known. A vital question, then, is how are these embodied theories that we have described above working in practice—and what are the related challenges, successes, and strategies? Furthermore, it is important to ask how the successes of Caribbean sexual minority organizing affect the academic research and methodologies of Caribbean sexuality studies. We argue in this project that like-minded researchers seek answers and tools for analysis, with specific attention to the work being done in the region. We also argue that it is through local scholarly and non-scholarly knowledges, community organizing, and embodied theories that we can transform the limited discourses around sex and sexuality for Caribbean people generally and sexual minorities particularly.

This attention to the local and to the realities of sexual minority organizing in the region has led to important interrogations of different kinds of homophobias and explanations of how homophobia works in different communities across the region. Such work was brought together through the first “Caribbean Sexualities Gathering” in Kingston, Jamaica, in June 2009, sponsored by the Caribbean International Resource Network (IRN), which connects academic and community-based researchers, artists, and activists around the Caribbean and in the diaspora in areas related to diverse sexualities and genders.^{vii}

The Caribbean IRN brought together over 30 scholars, artists, writers, and activists from around the region, representing more than 10 Caribbean countries, as well as several of the local and regional Caribbean sexual minority advocacy organizations—including SASOD, CAISO, J-FLAG, FOKO Curacao, among others.^{viii} The gathering consisted of a panel discussion at the Caribbean Studies Association (CSA) conference, a five-hour workshop, and a closing reception; during these events, we communed, networked, and collaborated. Some of the highlights included intense dialogues about the many issues affecting sexual minorities in the region, and shared specifics in different countries. We also talked about sexual minority communities in the region and how to deal with homophobia and the struggle for sexual and gender equality. We discussed the need to theorize about different kinds of homophobia and the need to recognize and discuss how vibrant sexual minority communities can exist alongside intense homophobia. We talked about different ways of “being out,” concerns about safety, and the privilege of visibility. We discussed allies, the support of families, and creating new kinds of families. We brainstormed about how to create safe spaces for sexual minorities and gender non-conforming people. We formulated ideas about how to use academic and creative work as forms of activism. We discussed possible collaborations among researchers, community organizers, and creative producers—and how some of us blur the lines among these distinctions.^{ix}

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Out of this network and regional building in 2009, and our work with the Caribbean IRN and other organizations, several projects have emerged that blur the lines between academia and community. These projects are grounded in the local and reflect embodied theories in their creation and production, including various oral history projects and the building of a digital archive housed through the open access Digital Library of the Caribbean at www.dloc.com/icirn, comprising three collections so far—a general collection of materials from newspaper articles to academic papers, the Jamaica Gay Freedom Movement Archives, and the Rainbow Alliance of the Bahamas Archives. Furthermore, we published an online, open access collection in June 2012 called *Theorizing Homophobias in the Caribbean: Complexities of Place, Desire and Belonging*, at caribbeanhomophobias.org. This is a multi-media collection of activist reports, creative writing, critical essays, film, interviews, and performance and visual art that defines and reflects on the complexities of homophobias in the Caribbean, while also expanding awareness about Caribbean sexual minority lives, experiences, and activism in the region and its diaspora. This collection is unique in its creation and production because of its accessibility, multimedia format, and the collaborative work among activists, scholars, artists, writers, and community-based organizations and researchers inside and outside the region. The concept of embodied theories is at the center of this collection as it pays careful attention to and privileges local and regional knowledge production and community organizing. The Caribbean IRN has also initiated a collaborative intervention in the realm of academia through the annual Caribbean Studies Association (CSA) conference. At the last three CSA conferences, the focus and networking of people involved in the Caribbean IRN and regional sexual minority organizations have strengthened both academic and community knowledge production and building. At these conferences, we have seen the numbers of panels and discussions about sexuality grow, as well as the participation by openly sexual minority Caribbean people—scholars, graduate students, activists, and community workers. We challenged the heteronormative and heterosexist dynamics of the conference space. We opened spaces and forums to discuss strategies to confront homophobia, while building coalitions, and theorizing/researching Caribbean Sexuality Studies. We also started the dialogue and organizing within CSA to form the first Caribbean Sexualities Working Group, and many of us through local, regional, and diasporic networks are sustaining this work. Moreover, the Caribbean IRN collaborated with the Institute for Gender and Development Studies at UWI St. Augustine and CAISO to offer a unique short course on Critical Sexuality Studies in July 2013, which included a series of public events.^x The authors have focused here on our own work with the Caribbean IRN because it spans both academic and non-academic realms, and because we are intimately familiar with it. Of course, many individuals and organizations, including CAFRA, SASOD, Pink House, Red Thread, CAISO, Sevovie, Caribbean HIV/AIDS Partnership, CODE RED for Gender Justice, CatchAFyah Network, and CariFLAGS, are doing important work around Caribbean sexualities.

Some of the challenges Caribbean communities continue to face include the politics of respectability, failures to openly discuss sex and sexuality, religious fundamentalism, cultural norms, legacies of colonialism, the ways in which homosexuality is framed as a white or Euro-American disease, and emergent forms of imperialism and neocolonialism. Moreover, the symptoms of homophobia sometimes emerge in violent ways through

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institutions and culture—for instance in music (particularly dancehall, which when labeled “murder music” becomes the scapegoat for all things homophobic, whereas other Caribbean music is rarely discussed), HIV/AIDS work, human rights discourse, foreign funding, silence and stigma of HIV/AIDS and sex work, and the push/pull of migration. However, the local and regional engagement with these serious issues must be highlighted, analyzed, and engaged to achieve a more complete understanding of Caribbean sexualities and lived experiences of sexual minorities. Therefore, anti-violence work and sexual minority community organizing must be connected to locally rooted conversations and frameworks about social change and social justice—and they must account for intersectionality and the relationships among various kinds of violence (e.g., patriarchal violence contributes to homophobic violence).

The successes of this kind of work are reflected in the work of campaigns in the region through Caribbean advocacy organizations such as SASOD (Guyana), CAISO (Trinidad and Tobago), J-FLAG (Jamaica), CariFLAGS (Regional), Sevovie (Haiti), and PinkHouse (Curaçao), among others. These organizations and networks have built and are building coalitions and reflecting the praxis we have outlined here through existing coalitions that expand political campaigns to include sexual minority concerns, the hosting of political education workshops, and community dialogues on gender, sexuality, homophobia, violence, community building, and Caribbean history, all the while providing and sustaining safe spaces for sexual minorities, sex workers, and others in the region. Caribbean sexuality studies must take praxis, itself an embodied theory, seriously in its scholarship. Meanwhile, those of us in academia outside the region (diasporic researchers) who are deeply engaged with and tied to this work must continue working to make the research, data, and scholarship more available and more easily accessible for activists, community workers, teachers, artists, writers, and institutions in the Caribbean. In this way, we can strive to truly connect with each other and create community among scholars, researchers, writers, activists, community workers, activists, and artists.

Conducting research that is respectful of and responsive to the communities we study, that acknowledges the spatial as well as intellectual location of the scholar, that acknowledges the materiality and affect of the body, may seem to be an onerous task, especially when one is also encouraged to take different languages and ways of knowing seriously, and to distribute one’s research broadly. In truth, though, many of us scholars want our work to be responsive and to be widely read and understood. Our work is typically not simple or easy, even without these considerations, and we know that the better our scholarship is, the more it can benefit our communities in and beyond the academy. We encourage our fellow scholars “not [to] be ashamed of finding pleasure in our work,” and to find that pleasure in an expansive worldview represented, in part, in the methodological approaches suggested here (Rodriguez 2003, 161).

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ⁱ. Carole Boyce Davies and Rinaldo Walcott are two notable exceptions.

ⁱⁱ. The Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action, www.cafra.org.

ⁱⁱⁱ CODE RED for Gender Justice. <http://redforgender.wordpress.com/>

^{iv}. For more info, see Sojourner Truth's "Aint I A Woman," Toni Cade Bambara's essay "On the Issue of Roles," and Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble*, More work needs to be done to unpack the term "man" in relationship to the Caribbean, though the collections *The Culture of Gender and Sexuality in the Caribbean* by Linden Lewis and *Learning to Be a Man: Culture, Socialization, and Gender Identity in Five Caribbean Communities* by Barry Chevannes are major interventions.

^v. For descriptions of these terms, see Lescot and Magloire's film *Of Men and Gods*, Kamala Kempadoo's *Sun, Sex, and Gold*, Lawrence La Fountain-Stokes' article "Queer Ducks, Puerto Rican Patos and Jewish

American Seygelekh: Birds and the Cultural Representation of Homosexuality,” Gloria Wekker’s *Politics of Passion*, and Makeda Silvera “Man Royals and Sodomites.”

^{vi}. See Jacqui Alexander and Elizabeth Pravisini for explorations of the sacred.

^{vii}. The IRN is housed at the Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies at the City University of New York, funded through the Ford Foundation, and located on the Web at <http://www.irnweb.org>.

^{viii}. The authors of this paper were co-organizers of this event. Organizations represented included Coalition Advocating for Inclusion of Sexual Orientation in Trinidad (CAISO), FOKO Curacao, Jamaican Forum for All Sexuals, Gays and Lesbians (J-FLAG), Society Against Sexual Orientation Discrimination in Guyana (SASOD).

^{ix}. The full report is available online through the Digital Library of the Caribbean, Caribbean IRN Collection: <http://dloc.com/AA00000022/00001>.

^x For more info about the Critical Sexuality Studies course, see the Caribbean IRN website: <http://www.irnweb.org/projects/advanced-sexuality-studies-course/>



<http://sta.uwi.edu/crgs/index.asp>



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Working with Marginalized and ‘Hidden’ Populations: Researchers’ Anxieties and Strategies for Doing Less Harmful Research

Latoya Lazarus

Abstract

This article addresses some of the anxieties and concerns that up-and-coming or first-time researchers may have about doing research on gender and sexuality with illegalized and marginalized populations. Specifically, the paper addresses anxieties and concerns around gaining access to “hidden” study populations, developing trust, and the risk of misrepresenting or appropriating voices. In addressing these issues, I examine the contributions of feminist methodologies to the study of gender and sexuality and, in particular, the study of “hidden” populations such as sex workers and those engaged in same-sex relations. In doing so, I focus on two broader but interconnected methodological issues around doing “ethical” research. First, I highlight some of the various ways feminists have dealt with the manifestations of power imbalances within the research setting—especially when conducting interviews or undertaking ethnographic work—mainly in regards to gaining access to research populations, as well as seeking “truths” and constructing knowledge while avoiding causing preventable harm. I also identify some methodological points that may be appropriate to consider when researching illegalized and marginalized populations. Second, I scrutinize the advantages and disadvantages that are connected to doing research with illegalized and marginalized populations from an insider/outsider position. In particular, I ask, how does explicitly working from this subject-position shape research on illegalized and marginalized populations within the region?

Introduction and overview

Among the many anxieties and concerns researchers face are those concerning the feasibility of actually reaching those goals that initially made them excited about undertaking the particular project, the number of things that can and sometimes do go wrong throughout the process and, somewhere in all this, the fear of causing some form of harm to their participants or even to themselves. It goes without saying that for first-time researchers, this list may be even longer and the anxieties deeper. Moreover, many of these anxieties and concerns are further intensified and complicated when research focuses not on the powerful, but rather on the powerless, marginalized, and oppressed, as well as those who are seen as being “on the edge of society” or the so-called “hidden” populations.ⁱ For example, David Murray, who has published numerous works on Caribbean peoples’ sexual politics and identity formations, speaks to this in the following statement:

Yes, there is almost always some level of anxiety when doing research with sexual minority participants in the Caribbean, although I have found my level of anxiety is directly related to the interviewee’s degree of being “out” in their community. For example, I was less worried when I was interviewing leaders of the local HIV/AIDS support groups, as they were already “out” in public arenas like the media and were thus well known in Barbados. However, my worries would increase when I was talking with men who were not “out” in their day-to-day lives, and who felt that disclosure of their sexual preference could be damaging or dangerous to them and/or their family (e-mail correspondence, October 12, 2011).

This article is, on one hand, my journey into self-reflection as a “diasporic” Caribbean subject, with an obvious insider/outsider subject-position, embarking on research within the Caribbean and particularly with a segment of the Caribbean population that may not only be described as marginalized, at least in some areas of their lives, but also “hidden” or on the “edge of society” due to their outlawed and socially stigmatized sexuality or perceived sexual practices.ⁱⁱ Thus, I examine some of my own anxieties and concerns about doing research on gender and sexuality with illegalized and marginalized populations that less experienced or first-time researchers may share at some point prior to and/or during their research process. Specifically, I address anxieties and concerns around gaining access to a “hidden” study population and the possibility of misrepresenting or appropriating voices, all of which reflect the overarching fears of failing to develop trust, or breaching such trust and thereby causing or doing harm. On the other hand, this paper is also an engagement with the existing contributions of feminist methodologies to the study of gender and sexuality and, in particular, the study of “hidden” populations such as sex workers and those engaged in same-sex relations.

This paper is divided into two sections. First, I will highlight some of the various ways feminists have dealt with the identified anxieties and manifestations of power imbalances within the research setting. In particular, I point up some methodological points, identified by Euro-American feminist researchers, as well as by Caribbeanists from both inside and outside the region that may be appropriate to consider when researching

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illegalized and marginalized populations.ⁱⁱⁱ Second, I scrutinize the advantages and disadvantages that are connected to doing research with illegalized and marginalized populations from an insider/outsider position. In particular, I ask, how does explicitly working from this subject-position shape research on illegalized and marginalized populations within the region? And, what are some of the concerns and anxieties that one may have when conducting research from these positions? This is in part my reflection on how others with a similar insider/outsider subject-position as my own contribute to research within the region and to Caribbean methodologies specifically. Of course, the indispensable importance of local Caribbeanists' ongoing sociocultural connectedness to or "on the ground knowledge" of development in these areas can hardly be overstated. Although this subject-position also has its own complexities and even disadvantages, there are certain undeniable benefits to living and doing research within the same region—such as having the opportunity, through various interactions, to hear the full range of local opinions on a topic of interest.

It is also important to emphasize here that there is often not a clear divide or dichotomy between the insider and the outsider, the local and the "diasporic" researcher, as a result of the fluidity of identities and interactions, as well as movements within and between cultural and national spaces. This means that even supposedly local Caribbean researchers may find themselves navigating the role of simultaneously occupying an insider/outsider position, depending on a number of interconnected factors including gender, sexuality, age, ethnicity, "race," color, education, religion, rural or urban location, and nationality. Indeed, in discussing the insider-outsider debate, Nancy Naples (2006, 140 cited in Chavez 2008, 476) "ultimately claims that '[i]nsiderness or outsidership are not fixed or static positions, rather they are ever-shifting and permeable social locations that are differentially experienced and expressed by community members," and researchers must negotiate rapport within the spectrum of social identity. Her perspective suggests that whether insider or outsider, neither has a monopoly on advantage or objectivity (cited in Chavez 2008, 476).

Feminists' contributions

Feminists in general make four broad contributions that may be applied more generally to research with and for peoples who are oppressed, marginalized and/or belonging to "hidden" populations. These are (1) decentering of white heterosexual middle-class males in research as well as privileged non-white heterosexual middle-class males, particularly in the Caribbean context; (2) increasing awareness of differences; (3) identifying and seeking to address a range of methodological issues that draw attention to the workings of differential power within research; and (4) viewing research as empowering. These four broad contributions thus take into account a number of ethical issues that pertain to assessing truth, gaining access to a research population, and assigning authority to speak or to establish the facts, as well as researchers' apprehensions about doing harm through the (mis)representation and the appropriation of voices and texts.

Caribbean feminist researchers, in particular, have also contributed to the development of ethical research methodologies that seek to address the workings of power both within the research setting and the wider social, political, economic, and cultural environment in which women and other marginalized people live. This is perhaps most obvious in the

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methodological goals and research material generated by the Women in the Caribbean Project (WICP). Although undertaken more than 30 years ago, this project is arguably one of the most comprehensive of its kind to date within the region. Specifically, it explicitly sought to formulate and engage with Caribbean feminists' research methodologies that center women's voices and experiences on a number of issues, though it ultimately dealt predominantly with Afro-Caribbean working-class women. Joycelin Massiah (1986), in her overview of the WICP, states that the aim was to create regional Caribbean feminist methodology and theoretical frameworks, rather than unquestioningly adopting pre-existing Euro-American models:

Like women researchers in many regions of the world, WICP researchers were faced with the situation that knowledge of women's experiences in their region has been filtered through studies and methodological tools designed, conducted and interpreted by males. Personal experience and knowledge of their communities persuaded the group that a more accurate picture could be obtained by addressing issues other than the structure and function of family groups. The major objective of the project was therefore to identify the subjective meaning of the social realities which women face, the way these realities are manifested and the consequences at the individual, community and societal level. We wished to identify the gaps in our knowledge about women's activities, to try to fill these gaps and to identify areas for further research. The second major objective of the study was to devise a theoretical framework, which would integrate the analysis of women's roles as they are affected by processes of social change (1).

This need to create frameworks inspired by and reflective of Caribbean women's lived experiences thus expanded on feminists' understandings of the disparities between women and the differential workings and manifestations of power that shape their experiences. Caribbean feminist methodologies are, therefore, not simply derivative of existing Euro-American frameworks but are informed by and in turn produce knowledge, with its own drawbacks, about the complexities of women's experiences within the region. However, there are clearly some commonalities in the kinds of methodological (and ethical) concerns that these women and their counterparts in other regions of the world seek to address. Namely, in centering women in their research, they also had to contend with challenges around seeking to access often already marginalized communities, as well as determining who had the authority to speak and what could be counted as legitimate representations of Caribbean women's lives.

Of course, the above-identified anxieties or concerns are by no means unique to feminist researchers. Rather, social researchers have, in general, become more attentive to these ethical issues, especially as they relate to marginalized populations. Nevertheless, feminists have made tremendous contributions in highlighting these ethical issues long before they were seen as elements of common practice in mainstream social science methodologies. They continue to highlight these and other issues in their research,

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teachings, and collaborations within and across academic disciplines and institutions. In fact, their commitment to starting research from the situated location, or with the self-identified problems, of any particular group of peoples in order to gain understandings of their concrete experiences, as well as their anticipation and expansion of what may be considered harmful, even unintentionally, arguably makes them better attuned than more traditionally oriented social science researchers to some of the ethical concerns that cause much anxiety and apprehension for researchers (Reinharz 1992, 27; see also Wolf 1996).

Addressing differential power

Feminists' ongoing attention to such issues is testimony to their commitment to addressing the workings of differential power within the research process. Indeed, when research includes the marginalized, oppressed, or those on the "edges of society," as Trudi James and Hazel Platzer (1999) point out, it is also equally important to widen our perceptions of who may be at risk for exploitation and harm in order to attend fully to the above-mentioned anxieties and ethical concerns. They argue as follows:

Most often vulnerability is considered with regard to children and, more recently, elderly people and those who are mentally ill...there is a greater differential power imbalance between researchers and lesbians and gay men, partly as a result of... their marginalization and their lack of civil rights compared with their heterosexual counterparts. The risk of harm is therefore much greater... (James and Platzer 1999, 74).

Such harm includes the potential for the data not only to misrepresent voices, but also to further "perpetuate their outlaw status" through negative stereotyping as well as "identify[ing] them" or granting unwanted visibility, "invit[ing] voyeurism," "expos[ing] protective mechanisms," and "deepen[ing] the stigma that is attached to their culture" (ibid., 79-80). Similarly, in addressing his own anxiety about studying Caribbean gay men who are not "out," Murray speaks to the importance of being aware of the potential for causing harm, even through the most apparently innocuous interactions. He states the following:

Some of these men told me that being seen with a white man in a public place like a restaurant or store could especially be risky because if someone they knew saw us together they would assume that the relationship must be sexual (why else would a white and black man be sitting together at a table in a restaurant) and "commercial" (i.e., the white man was most likely paying for the black man's meal, so the latter was therefore a prostitute). I thus became quite sensitive to the location and time in which I would meet with some participants, and I became more self-conscious of my own comportment and dress-style, in an attempt to minimize attention from others (e-mail correspondence, October 12, 2011).

In addition to addressing vulnerability as it relates to the manifestations of power within the research context, which are intimately linked to both the researcher's and

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participant's subjectivities, including others' perceptions about these, Murray's statement is insightful as it also speaks to a number of other related anxieties and research issues. How do we work through our differences and get people, especially those who are most vulnerable to harm, to share their experiences with us, especially when we are considered outsiders? More importantly, how do we even begin to do research that is so fraught with power imbalances based on the differential positionalities of all those involved in the research process?

Gaining access

Throughout the years, feminist methodologies have impressed on us that research must begin with gaining and maintaining trust as well as developing good rapport or relations between the researcher and participants. Both of these issues may cause some apprehension for researchers seeking access to a potential study population, especially if they have no previous relationship or contact with this population. Kamala Kempadoo (2001) in her study on Caribbean sex workers, for instance, emphasizes this point when she notes that "the issue of gaining trust among sex-workers was critical. Rapport had to be established and confidentiality ensured before work could begin" (44). This may not be an easy process or one that automatically occurs when a researcher begins this stage of her or his work. Indeed, when working with certain marginalized, "hidden," and criminalized populations, such as sex workers and same-sex peoples in the Caribbean, experienced researchers have noted that "such studied invisibility made it particularly difficult for outsiders to access this population" (Carr 2003, 10). This difficulty in gaining access, as Robert Carr (2003) argues, may be experienced by researchers who also live within the region, but are constituted in this regard as outsiders, as a result of their lack of any initial affiliation with these frequently deeply underground communities. Consequently, "highly trusted gatekeepers" may become crucial to making such studies viable. In other words, one may have to rely on those individuals who are in a position to "permit access to others for the purpose of interviewing" (Miller and Bell 2005, 55) or who may facilitate, as Murray states, first introductions and interactions between researcher and respondents. In his study on identity formations among Martinicans, Murray (2002) recounts that he did not gain access straight away to the group of gay men that he writes about; rather, "[i]nformation about these people and places came very slowly—the turning point occurred after I identified myself as gay to a couple of men who turned out to be well connected to a network of gay men in the city and around the island" (12). Murray is thus simultaneously positioned here as both an outsider (as an Anglo-Canadian) and an insider (as a gay man) in relation to his study population. This, as I will discuss in more detail in the second half of this paper, creates a complex and somewhat ambiguous subject-position that may both foster and hinder fieldwork as well as the subsequent reception of research findings. Moreover, the possibility to be positioned simultaneously as both outsider and insider once again blurs the divide between the two, illustrating the ability to embody multiple roles and identities within the research process.

Although researchers may be dependent on the assistance and knowledge of gatekeepers, at least in the initial stages of our projects, we must be aware that often there may in turn be various degrees of power imbalances in the relations between us and the gatekeepers, as well as our potential participants. Specifically, feminists have cautioned us about the

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“potential exercising of power by some individuals over others” (Miller and Bell 2005, 55). For example, Tina Miller and Linda Bell (2005) note that there is often an assumption that providing consent is a voluntary process. But the reliance on a gatekeeper, particularly one who can assert power within a group, raises questions pertaining to access, coercion, participation, and most importantly, voluntary informed consent. Indeed, “some potential participants may find resistance more difficult” (ibid., 56), especially where issues of gender, ethnicity and, I will argue, sexuality manifest. In Miller and Bell’s study, the gatekeeper “volunteered or gave wholesale access to” seemingly “vulnerable powerless Bangladeshi women,” who found it difficult not to participate because of the respect for and the importance of the gatekeeper to their daily survival (62). Such experiences no doubt not only make it difficult for the researcher to determine who is actually giving consent, but the researched may also not fully understand the implications of the consent. James and Platzer (1999), as well as Miller and Bell (2005), therefore, caution that even as we go about accepting the help of “valuable insiders” who can ostensibly minimize our anxieties around gaining access and the trust of potential research participants, consent should be ongoing and renegotiated between researcher(s) and participants throughout the research process. This gives participants the chance to re-evaluate their involvement in the study and withdraw if necessary, which may provide participants with some degree of protection against earlier unforeseeable discomforts, exploitation, and general harm.

Moreover, feminist researchers have also warned against the control that gatekeepers may try to assert over researchers themselves in exchange for facilitating access. Kempadoo (2001) shares her experience of this particular manifestation of power within the Caribbean research context:

In some instances, however, officials acted as gatekeepers, attempting to censor the information collected and to control the researchers’ movements. The fact that prostitution was by and large an illegal activity yet lined the pockets of many a business person, police officer or government official...meant that probes and investigation by, in particular feminist, researchers into the field could be viewed as a challenge to state or male complicity in the sex trade (44).

Needless to say, it is thus extremely important for first-time researchers, particularly those who are doing research with marginalized, oppressed, criminalized, and “hidden” groups, to practice great circumspection even as we eagerly pursue our research goals. Such care and caution, as Kempadoo argues, are “thus needed on the part of the researcher or teams to avoid placing themselves in a situation where they would be perceived as a threat by the authorities [even if these people were acting as facilitators] or where their investigations would harm sex workers” (ibid.). Kempadoo’s appeal for care and caution is not, of course, an encouragement to kowtow to powerful gatekeepers, nor is it a dissuasion from doing potentially risky and important research; rather, it is simply a reminder to take heed of (though not be unduly deterred by) some of our anxieties, namely, around gaining access, trust and the likelihood of causing harm.

We might, for example, consider how my own trajectory informed my engagement with gatekeepers and experience as a researcher. I left Jamaica at age 17 and lived in Canada for about 11 years until I moved to Barbados in 2011. I have therefore “returned” to the *region* I had left—but to a specific *territory* I had never visited before. From being an insider/outsider as a Jamaican resident in Canada, in relation to Jamaica I might now be described as an insider/returnee/outsider, since some will consider that I have “returned”—that is, been received back into the bosom of the Anglophone Caribbean—but I am still self-evidently outside Jamaica and in some senses more removed from it than in Canada, as I no longer reside with Jamaican family members and my extended support network no longer predominantly comprises other Jamaicans.

Further, my sense of my “Jamaican-ness” now has different parameters: the inputs that trigger discussion of my Jamaican identity or self-reflection on it are now generated from an intra-Caribbean perspective, which views that identity somewhat differently from its extra-Caribbean, North American counterpart. For all “diasporic” subjects, the sense of origin is always emotionally lived as well as intellectually formulated; where the diasporic context changes, the emotions and self-formulations are also likely to change. When planning research in and about Jamaica, then, I must ask myself such questions as the following: How has my own history predisposed me to think about Jamaica, Jamaicans, and my own Jamaicanness? Is my viewpoint nostalgic? Do I feel any hint of unwarranted superiority over those who have not had as much opportunity to see Jamaica through the eyes of outsiders? Conversely, might I feel undue anxiety about being a “deracinated” Jamaican, causing me to over-identify in order to belong again? To what extent might I have unconsciously absorbed the ideological and political viewpoints of North American academia toward Jamaican sexual politics? Whilst it is unreasonable to ask anyone to identify the origins of all of their ideological positionings, it is reasonable that they should at least pose such questions to themselves and include such self-analysis transparently in their work so that others may draw their own conclusions.

On reflecting on these questions, I decided, from the onset of my doctoral dissertation research, that it would be beneficial to discuss these concerns, whenever possible, with other Caribbeanists, both from within and outside the region. This opportunity was made possible through my attendance at various conferences, including the yearly Caribbean Studies Association (CSA) event, as well as by intentionally contacting some individuals. Specifically, I sought out the help of more “knowledgeable individuals,” a list of whom was determined by the individuals’ research and theoretical experiences and/or cultural as well as on-the-ground knowledge. Of course, whilst I sought out their guidance and assistance, especially in the interviewing stages of my research, I always heeded the above-raised methodological (and ethical) concerns and advice, particularly in regard to being aware of various manifestations of power imbalances as well as the need to practice care and caution when relying on gatekeepers as well as those perceived to be “authentic insiders.”

Consequently, whilst I welcomed the suggestions of my gatekeepers on certain issues, I was cautious not to hand over complete control to these persons to the extent that my research would reflect their interests instead of my own. These interactions, therefore, involved some amount of negotiation and much contemplation on my part. Still, they

were tremendously helpful, as I was given useful information on a number of issues, including possible literature to read, questions that may be seen as especially relevant to respondents, as well as recommendations about potential respondents and how to go about the business of recruiting these persons. For instance, I obtained a number of respondents through the help of one knowledgeable person who took an interest in my research topic; this person was able to recruit these respondents, some of whom were prominent members of the clergy, because of her prior relationship with those individuals. Thus, her strong recommendation served to validate, in the eyes of those respondents, both the study itself and my presence as the researcher.

Assessing “truths” and assigning authority to speak

Unfortunately, the potential for breaching trust and causing some form of avoidable harm to our participants can intensify as the research progresses from one stage to the next: as one digs deeper, the stakes may rise for participants and researchers alike. For example, in seeking information, the interviewer may ask questions that require the respondent to recall memories that she or he may feel uncomfortable sharing or even recalling at all. Worse still, some respondents, as I have most recently experienced in my role as a researcher for my dissertation project, may also interpret a question as a judgment on their beliefs and character. In such cases, respondents may show obvious signs of discomfort, choose not to address the question, and even become more guarded, impatient, or agitated in subsequent conversations. Fortunately, I was able to quickly rephrase my question when it became apparent that my respondents were becoming uncomfortable or defensive, based on cues such as changes in their facial expressions or posture, repeated clearing of the throat, or repetition of “disclaimers” to the effect that the views being expressed were not necessarily reflective of their affiliated organization.

Evidently, the recommendation to proceed with care and caution is thus not solely relevant to our interactions with gatekeepers or to those earlier phases of seeking access. In fact, many researchers develop justifiable concerns about misrepresenting or appropriating the voices of those they speak to, once they gain access and go about their business of doing data collection and analysis. Michelle Rowley (2002, 23), for example, expresses her moment of anxiety in regards to “scribing and translating” in final documentation of the complex expressions and representations of Caribbean women’s identities that surfaced within the research context. This anxiety around representation and re-presenting the words of others raises a number of methodological questions, including “[w]here does the respondent end and the researcher begin?” And, “[i]n what ways do my choice of words and selection of narratives reflect my own concerns rather than the issues of the subjects being interviewed?” (ibid.) Although these questions may not always be easily answered, they are nevertheless pertinent to consider as they draw attention to the fact that knowledge, as Rowley identifies, is co-constructed and socially derived (thus blurring the divide between the researcher and the researched).

Shulamith Reinharz (1992) likewise points up the benefit of dialogue in knowledge construction to avoid misunderstandings or misrepresentations. According to Reinharz, researchers should start with the intention of trusting what the participant is saying. If, however, the researcher feels doubtful about the information he or she is receiving in the interview, for example, then the researcher should question the participant. Certainly,

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there are a number of benefits that may be derived from analyzing moments of possible deception during interviewing. Namely, to avoid misrepresentations that may arise, even unconsciously, as people “editorialize” their experiences in the process of constructing narratives about them for consumption by others. Furthermore, analyzing moments of misrepresentation or outright deception may shed light on areas of sensitivity on the part of interviewees as well as assist the researcher to compile a repertoire of taboos held by the individual or even the larger community (interviewees who engage in criminal or stigmatized behavior, for example, may offer only a partial version of their actual range of experiences).

More problematically still, researchers must critically examine the very aim of seeking “truths” and the potentiality of silencing certain voices in the process. Accordingly, others, notably, Lorraine Code (2008), Judith Roof (2007), Michelle Rowley (2002), and Joan Scott (2008), further problematize not only the goal of seeking “truths” about an individual’s experiences, but also the matter of how power manifests within the research context, thus influencing who gets trusted to speak accurately. Put differently, feminists such as the above-named, point out that besides more obvious concerns about the participants’ possibly reporting lies, researchers also need to reflect on underlying issues of how we determine who has the authority to speak and to be believed, and how situated locations shape this process.

Similar to Rowley’s (2002, 28) critique of “whether one talk can be seen as more legitimate or authentic than another,” Roof (2007) astutely highlights the complication in assigning some people the role of “authentic” informants who have the unquestionable right to speak not only for themselves but for everyone within the group:

Because it is their experience and because speakers have most often been disenfranchised in one way or another, these experiences and feelings are presumed to be genuine and unmediated — that is, oppressed people are more capable than others of communicating their experiences without inflecting these experiences with dominant ideologies or self-interest. They are imagined to speak from the heart...Situating such testimony as unassailable displaces issues of authority into the identities of those often deemed to be “other” (436).

This critique is crucial in that it warns against failing to recognize the partiality of people’s knowledge based on their limited locations, as well as the danger of blindly assuming only similarities and not seeing significant differences, based on self-interest or relations to power, amongst those who claim—even if only implicitly—to be insiders or valid speakers of a group. Moreover, it speaks to, as Rowley (2002) also emphasizes, the possibility that dominant, historically constituted discourses also shape the knowledge or talk of the marginalized. This failure, mainly as it relates to wider matters about misrepresentation and appropriation of voices in research, has long been identified by Caribbean feminists as well as other feminists of color, in particular, who problematize the role of authenticity in traditional sociological “truth”-seeking processes (see, for examples, Hill-Collins 1991; Massiah 1986; Minh-ha 1989; Mohanty 2003; Narayan 1997; Rowley 2002; Tuhiwai Smith 1999).

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Chandra Mohanty (2003, 17-42), for example, argues that Western feminists have produced an essentialist image of the average Third World woman (and I would argue that a similar homogenizing (mis)representation exists for the average Third World same-sex person) as being sexually constrained, ignorant, poor, uneducated as well as traditional, family- and domestic-oriented, all of which gets read as “victimized.” One may, therefore, be inclined to reconsider the above-cited characterization of the Bangladeshi women in Miller and Bell’s study as vulnerable, powerless, and completely dependent on the gatekeeper. We might consider, for example, to what extent might these women’s relationships with the gatekeeper and their identities have been oversimplified in the authors’ analysis as well as in my reinterpretation of their work? Obviously, these kinds of homogenizing misrepresentations, which Mohanty speaks of, have consequences for how these subjects are expected to speak and represent themselves in research. These expectations sometimes cause, as Trinh Minh-ha (1989) also argues, researchers to exclude or overlook, whether consciously or not, testimony that fails to confirm those expectations. Therefore, the construction of the authentic representative who is empowered to speak the “truth,” unfortunately, erases multiple identities and situated positionalities of individuals within any given group, as well as masks varied power inequalities.

The above sentiments illustrate that it would be misguided to assume that dominant, essentializing, and potentially damaging ideologies, discourses, and language have no influence on the ways in which persons belonging to historically marginalized and oppressed groups understand and talk about their experiences. Thus, even as researchers set out to historicize experience and write about identity, we must take care, as Rowley (2002) advises, to encourage dialogue that is aimed at hearing multiple voices and the smaller, more tailored “truths” about experiences versus the more essentialized “Truth” of grand theory and master narratives. Equally importantly, researchers should recognize that the risk of misrepresentation is connected not only to the respondent’s “lack of authority” to speak about or represent the experiences of others, but, as Code (2008) notes, is also connected to the fact that “experiences are not simply reported; rather, they must be heard, read, understood and interpreted” (271).

The key question for researchers, as Code suggests then, simply becomes, “How do we do this [research] without misrepresenting or distorting what is being said?” (ibid.) Moreover, “if power is inherent in the construction of experience, how can feminist researchers struggle against dominant categories of interpretations or decide whose account is authoritative?” (ibid.) Like the scholars Code, Minh-ha, and Roof, Linda Alcoff (2008) challenges us to begin asking “whether or not this is a legitimate authority” (485). But more importantly, “[i]s the discursive practice of speaking for others ever a valid practice, and, if so, what are the criteria for validating? In particular, is it ever valid to speak for others who are unlike me or who are less privileged than me?” (ibid.) These concerns have long been connected to researchers’ apprehensions about the danger of misrepresenting what people say in the final write up or analysis, particularly on the part of those who work with any marginalized and oppressed group (Alcoff 2008; DeVault 1999; James and Platzer 1999; Rowley 2002), or of textually appropriating the voices of others for their own interests (Opie 2008).

Solutions to these problems range from avoiding interpretations altogether to including multiple interpretations or seeing research as a collaborative process (see DeVault 1999; Opie 2008; Reinharz 1992). The former, however, seems to be the least attractive choice amongst many feminists who argue that “to be consistent with the feminist principle of empowerment, one cannot discard the interpretative work” of the researcher (Sprague and Zimmerman 2004, 49). However, instead of speaking for, the researcher must aim for “speaking to, in which the intellectual neither abnegates his or her discursive role nor presumes an authenticity of the oppressed but still allows for the possibility that the oppressed will produce a ‘counter sentence’ that can then suggest a new historical narrative” (Alcoff 2008, 491). Similarly, Anne Opie (2008, 365-6) calls for a “deconstructive textual practice,” which refers to the ability to recognize the constraints of certain ideologies on the data as well as the various insights to be gained when researchers and participants share the interpretative work. This may mean, for example, including direct quotes or participants’ interpretations alongside that of the researcher’s (ibid.). These approaches are somewhat in line with Rowley’s preference, on the one hand, for “the act of voicing”—that is allowing women to “speak for themselves, name their experiences and make their own connections” (Massiah cited in Rowley 2002, 25)—and on the other hand, her analysis of the “talk of the narrative” (ibid., 28-29). The latter refers to the approach of treating the performance of talk, and by extension the act of voicing, as both an individual and collective activity that is also informed by the social site of production and not by notions of authenticity.

In addition, “feminist strategies” for avoiding misrepresentation and appropriation are concerned broadly with addressing differential power relations between the researcher and the researched and the aspiration to empowerment of the latter through the research itself. Researchers must thus recognize that there may be significant differences between themselves and the people they do research with, and this will have a great impact on the research process. For example, our differences based on such markers as “race,” class, sexuality, nationality, gender, age, ethnicity, and religion (as will be expanded on in the ensuing paragraphs) may determine our ability to access certain marginalized and “hidden” groups as well as influence what we are able to hear, see, understand, and write once we gain access (see James and Platzner 1999; Kempadoo 2001; Miller and Bell 2005; Murray 2002; Parry 2002). Accordingly, researchers must openly acknowledge the position, oftentimes one of privilege, from which they ask questions and make interpretations. In doing research in Martinique on identity formation, Murray (2002) was thus aware throughout the process that his “presence as a ‘white’ man may have censored the expression of other beliefs, feelings, or opinions among both gay and straight Martinican men as the white/black racial dyad has a major structuring influence in Martinican social life...” (12). As such, Murray knew that his position—including the language barriers between him and many of his respondents who often shifted rapidly from French to Créole or mixed these languages in public discussions—limited what he would hear, see, ask, and even understand. This awareness guides and contributes to the richness of his analysis.

The insider/outsider subject position

The discussion thus far has referred only tangentially to the important methodological issue of the benefits and disadvantages of doing research from the insider or outsider position. This is an issue that continues to garner much attention in a wide range of research methodologies, including those identified as feminist. For this reason, it is not surprising that it is also considered and debated over by researchers, including Carr, Kempadoo, Murray, and Parry, who do work on and with Caribbean peoples, particularly those belonging to oppressed, marginalized, and hidden populations. Of course, for these Caribbean and/or Caribbeanist researchers, as for many others not connected to the region, the concern over the insider or outsider position, as highlighted in previous paragraphs, is linked to wider methodological debates about the feasibility of doing certain research and, more generally, the complication of identity formation and “truth” seeking.

There is a consensus amongst many researchers, including the above-named Caribbeanists, that both positions have various strengths and limitations attached to them; in fact, one only has to browse through the pages of most undergraduate methodologies or methods textbooks to see this position being argued. However, researchers have further complicated our understandings of these roles by not only noting the advantages and disadvantages of being either an insider or an outsider, but of being both simultaneously. Caribbeanists, who live both within and outside the region, in particular, have also made tremendous contributions in interrogating this latter position of being both an insider and an outsider or an “outsider within,” thus contributing to and drawing on an existing body of knowledge developed by feminists of color such as Patricia Hill Collins (1991), and Third World feminists like Uma Narayan (1997) and Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999). For example, Murray states as follows:

I think both statuses have strengths and limitations. I am quite sure that as a national racial outsider (i.e., Canadian/white), some Bajans have limited their conversational topics with me, and that I have missed particular themes or concepts in their answers because I am not familiar with some aspects of local knowledge or language. However, I think my outsider status is sometimes advantageous, especially with marginalized groups who are “outsiders” in their own society, and may feel more comfortable speaking to someone from outside their community. In fact, I find this complicates the outsider/insider binary, as I may be simultaneously outsider/insider in certain research contexts (i.e., working with lgbtq communities in other societies) (e-mail correspondence, October 12, 2011).

Likewise, Andil Gosine notes there is not an easy division between the statuses of “outsider” and “insider.” Indeed, there will always be an “almost indeterminate number of divisions in groups, and different characteristics are going to make one ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ a group” (e-mail correspondence, November 15, 2011). Nevertheless, Gosine further declares that “I am both and neither in relation to my own research [on Caribbean sexualities]. I am from and deeply affectionate about the issues related to the Caribbean that I research, but I have spent so much of my life outside the region that I would not characterize me as an insider. Different experiences bring a different set of perspectives

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and questions to research; sometimes those seem advantageous, sometimes they don't" (ibid.).

On the one hand, for the above researchers, particularly Murray, being seen as simply an outsider would not only impede research but also pose a problem in the later stages of presenting the findings to an "insider" audience, who may tend to be dismissive or unduly critical of the researcher's ability to comprehend and empathize with a particular experience. Murray recalls, for instance, that

[there was] one woman who[m] I interviewed for my research on sexual rights and homophobia in Barbados who was very helpful in providing answers to my questions about changing attitudes towards homosexuals in Barbados. A few months later, I met her again in a classroom where I was presenting some of my findings. She raised her hand to tell me that I "didn't get it", and that she didn't think someone "like me" would ever be able to understand "how things work here" (e-mail correspondence, October 12, 2011).

Whilst it is often difficult to rebut *in situ* this kind of blanket dismissal made on the basis of a supposed local complexity that the "outsider" can never hope to grasp, such dismissals may often mask emotional discomfort arising precisely from the fact that the purported outsider is, in fact, "getting" a local behavior the speaker would rather not have aired publicly. Suffice to say Murray was not unduly deterred by this exclusionary move on the part of a formerly cooperative respondent.

On the other hand, Odette Parry (2002) complicates the insider/outsider binary when she notes that while there are advantages to being perceived as a "cultural insider,"

[a]t the same time there were conversations which occurred between myself and respondents which happened precisely because I was seen as different, foreign, and "temporary." These characteristics made me less "threatening" or "important," and hence topics were raised which would have seemed dangerous to share with a Jamaican researcher (99).

Despite this, however, Parry acknowledges that though being an "outsider did afford me privileged access to some areas of some women's lives, it compensated poorly for what was lost through the fact I had little experience in common with the participants" (ibid., 101).

Thus, the consensus amongst these Caribbeanists is that the position of the simultaneous insider/outsider may be the most advantageous of the three roles when doing certain types of research within the Caribbean. Put differently, certain types of research, particularly those involving marginalized, oppressed, and hidden groups, may require both familiarity but also some degree of distance or detachment from certain aspects of the participants' lives or from wider cultural norms; without this ambivalence, researchers may find it difficult, if not impossible, to gain access to potential participants, gain their trust, get them to talk without feeling judged, and avoid causing serious but likely preventable harm to everyone involved. Kempadoo (2001) sums this up as follows:

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Being in an outsider position in the very specific local context, yet familiar with Caribbean societies in general...enabled the researcher to feel more comfortable with entering the arena, particularly because she was not hindered by knowledge of local taboos...or the possibility that a friend or relative may see her in a place of “ill-repute” (45).

One can, therefore, certainly argue that this unique position of having some degree of familiarity but also distance may potentially result in the researcher being able to provide certain valuable insights and contributions to empowerment and knowledge production. Indeed, as Patricia Hill Collins (1991) asserts, simultaneously occupying the unique position of “nearness and remoteness...” has the advantage of the “tendency for people to confide in a ‘stranger’ in ways they never would with each other; and...the ability of the ‘stranger’ to see patterns that may be more difficult for those immersed in the situation to see” (36).

Additionally, the position of insider/outsider may afford some researchers, particularly those who are able to cross cultural and national borders, the privilege of developing critical knowledge and understandings about certain “controversial” issues on the basis of the possibility of asking certain questions that challenge oppressive systems of power and cultural customs throughout the region without the fear or risk of experiencing certain harm, including ongoing socioeconomic marginalization. One example of this is Alexander’s (1994) groundbreaking work that confronts normalizing systems of power, namely, heteropatriarchy, which position certain bodies as non-citizens within their nations of birth, or as abject objects of ridicule, mockery, rejection, and even violence (see also Alexander 2005, 2007). Others have followed suit by interrogating these extremely sensitive and “taboo” issues relating to sexual citizenship, homophobia, and sexuality, in general (see, for examples, Silvera 1997; Kempadoo 2004; Crichlow 2004; Wekker 1997; 2006). Thus, Gosine writes that in regard to doing his own research on Caribbean queer sexualities, his position as someone from, but not residing in, the Caribbean means that “there is a great deal less political and personal risk. I can raise questions without fear of losing my job and with the security of mobility and citizenship. I do think there are more risks involved for people working within the region because they are held to account in more direct and vulnerable ways” (e-mail correspondence, November 15, 2011). However, the researcher who identifies with an insider/outsider status must nevertheless proceed with extreme caution, as Kempadoo (2001) recommends, to avoid harm, especially to participants who are oftentimes highly vulnerable and who do not have the recourse of seeking security elsewhere.

Acknowledgment of the privilege of being able to cross national and cultural borders and thereby avoid negative repercussions does not, of course, imply that critical knowledge on matters related to sexuality has not also always been produced by people who still reside within the region and who risk political, social, and economic backlash and isolation. Indeed, a rich body of literature exists comprising a number of qualitative and quantitative studies by regionally based Caribbeanists. These include Robert Carr’s (2003, 2009) examination of homosexuality, sex work, violence, HIV/AIDS, and human rights in Jamaica; Cecil Gutzmore’s (2004) study on policing homosexuality in Jamaican

popular culture; and Ian Boxill's (2011) most recent analysis of attitudes toward homosexuality in Jamaica. Others, such as Christine Barrow (2009), also focus on young women's naming and complex ownership of their sexualities. In addition, legal scholar Tracy Robinson (1999, 2003, 2004, 2009) has long been engaged in the broader analysis of the configuration of sexuality and gender in citizenship projects in the Anglophone Caribbean, particularly in regards to processes of legislative reforms. These "insiders" may of course be seen as having the genuine advantage of granular knowledge of the society on a day-to-day basis. However, as previously suggested, they also experience methodological challenges in various capacities, some of which are connected to their perceived insider status, or to the reality that they are in fact never total insiders considering the complexity around identity formation and the researcher's role in particular. Furthermore, as with the experience of some researchers who are not locally or regionally based within the Caribbean, the very nature of the research subject may also create certain challenges. For example, Ian Boxill (2011) identifies that one of the major challenges faced in conducting focus group research on homosexuality was that "[m]any of the potential participants upon hearing of the topic were less than eager and some very adamant that they wanted no part of any discussion with homophobia and homosexuality as the headline. This was especially more pronounced in the attempts to organize the rural groups..." (11). Fortunately, the research team had anticipated such challenges because of their knowledge of the social desirability bias to avoid answering various types of questions or not tell the truth.

Nevertheless, the privilege of being able to cross national as well as cultural borders and thereby avoid negative repercussions further complicates understanding of the insider/outsider position. Specifically, how is the status of being insider/outsider viewed by those who claim cultural authenticity? Or rather, how is the subject position of being an insider/outsider problematized and challenged by those who are concerned with issues of cultural authenticity and the right to represent? These are important questions to consider, especially as they relate to wider research anxieties about gaining access to research settings and populations, building trust, and producing work that will be read not as appropriations or misrepresentations, but as legitimate representations by others, particularly by those who make claims to being "authentic insiders" or "cultural experts." My own research experiences, for example, again illustrate complexities around being perceived simultaneously as both an insider/outsider based on the cultural and national. Specifically, although I depended on "knowledgeable insiders" to act both as respondents and gatekeepers in my own dissertation research, my identity as a Jamaican and returnee to the region, arguably, informed respondents' reception of me. This was evident by the expressed approval of my "return" and interest in my place and culture of origin by many respondents. Additionally, the fact that I now live in Barbados also somewhat complicated how I was received and treated by some. On the one hand, this was treated by a few as evidence of my ongoing disconnect, thus further nuancing understandings of the "insider"/"outsider" subject-position. On the other, this was embraced by some, who were more familiar with or had lived in other countries in and outside the region, as a mutual opportunity on which to build rapport and make critical comparisons.

Conclusion

In closing, the existing sociopolitical atmosphere within the Caribbean toward such matters as homosexuality, for instance, makes it difficult if not potentially dangerous, for both researchers and respondents, to carry out research with particular populations. Whilst this has not stopped researchers from doing research on these so-called “hidden” populations, as Carr and others identify, it may inevitably place certain limits on such things as access to potential participants, the number and types of people that will eventually participate in the research, and the diversity of their experiences, thereby influencing or limiting the kinds of knowledge and discussions that can ensue from the fruits of these research projects—books, conference presentations, and policy recommendations. Still, there is an increasing body of work developing within the Caribbean on such vulnerable populations as same-sex peoples.

Nonetheless, there will always be room for further research and analysis as the status and experiences of such populations evolve. I have thus argued that although the subject-position of being an insider/outsider thus creates its share of obstacles, the contributions made from this position and the potential for initiating further research in this and other areas of sexuality cannot be overlooked or downplayed. However, researchers must first and foremost proceed with much caution and care when attempting to carry out such work. This may, as this paper highlights, be difficult at times, especially when dealing, as honestly as possible with the anxieties that we may have about failing as researchers as well as the various issues, some expected and others unforeseeable, that may arise throughout the research process.

Still, those with more experience in doing research, specifically with marginalized, oppressed, and hidden populations within the Caribbean, have imparted some important advice for doing less harmful, more ethical research. First, we must recognize that at times we may have to modify our behaviors, research goals, context, and methods in order to avoid doing harm to ourselves and/or others. Second, we should not be so naïve as to think that because the researcher is guided by ostensibly empowering feminist methodologies, the research context, particularly the development of relationships and roles, is therefore free of hierarchy, power imbalances, and the potential for violation and abuse of both the researcher and/or the respondents. Third, we must not be too quick to claim, embrace, or seek out what are being labeled as “authentic” experiences or representations. Instead, we should recognize not only our, but also the participants’ “limited location,” which informs the partiality of vision and knowledge. In doing so, we can avoid much of the dangers of misrepresenting and even invalidating or erasing the voices as well as the experiences of others through our research. Fourth, it is important to expand our understanding of what constitutes harm; when research includes marginalized, oppressed, or hidden populations, it is equally important to widen our perceptions of who may be at risk for exploitation and harm. As researchers, we must also recognize that the potential for doing harm is not confined to those initial stages of the research process, but may persist long after the research has been completed.

Finally, first-time researchers, including those doing research in the Caribbean with hidden, marginalized, and oppressed populations, may seek to overcome power imbalances between themselves and their participants by aiming for reciprocity and collaboration in the research relationship at the various stages (Holland and Ramazanoglu

1994), hence avoiding such harm as exploitation, misrepresentation, and appropriation. This may include something as small as having participants read—or if necessary your discussing with them—your written analysis at various stages before it is presented to a wider audience or sent off for publications, or including some of their interpretations, as Alcoff (2008) notes, alongside that of the researcher(s)’. Although this relationship may be the ideal, at least in theory, it may be difficult to implement in all research settings, especially when “there is conflict between the requirements made of a researcher through their membership of an academic or disciplinary community and the needs and interests” (Holland and Ramazanoglu 1994, 136) of the people they research.

Collaboration, at least between researchers who share similar research interests and goals may, however, be more feasible. For example, collaboration between researchers living outside the Caribbean and those who still live within the region may be a highly fruitful strategy for doing research within the region on marginalized and hidden populations, allowing for both positionings to be “triangulated” to generate a more nuanced account. Whether collaboration proves to be impossible or only attainable and useful in its most limited forms, however, it is important that research relationships, in order to maintain harmony and a check on power imbalances, be guided by reciprocal respect (see Smith 1999, 120).

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Email Correspondence

- Gosine, Andil, e-mail message to Latoya Lazarus. November 15, 2011 (on file with author).
- Murray, David A. B., e-mail message to Latoya Lazarus. October 12, 2011 (on file with author).

ⁱ Within feminist literature, a diverse group of people including sex workers (Kempadoo 2001), gays and lesbians (Alexander 2007; Blackwood 1995; Carr 2003; James and Platzer 1999; Murray 2002), sexually active youth (Holland and Ramazanoglu 1994), and women who have experienced domestic abuse, fall under the categorization of being not just amongst the oppressed and marginalized groups but also "hidden" populations. This is largely a contextually situated categorization, based on people having certain experiences and/or identities that are considered extremely "private," "deviant," and tabooed, or their even being criminalized because they counter dominant norms and value systems within specific

communities and their larger societies. Consequently, these people become further silenced, marginalized, stigmatized, shamed, and thus perpetually forced to remain “hidden” in their coexistence with the perceived unsympathetic and scrutinizing “majority.”

ⁱⁱ It is important to identify here that I have, since first drafting this article, completed most of my “field” research. I am currently analyzing and writing up these findings, which will comprise my doctoral dissertation.

ⁱⁱⁱ By “Caribbeanist,” I mean people interested in, and who do work on, the Caribbean. This category includes a wide range of academics and researchers, including both those who were born and still live within the region and those who have migrated to other places that make up the Caribbean Diaspora. It also includes those who were neither born nor ever lived within the region. However, the uniting factor that makes such people “Caribbeanist” is the centrality of various aspects of the Caribbean in their work.



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Women and Gender in Caribbean (English-speaking) Historiography: Sources and Methods

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Abstract

In 1974, Lucille Mathurin Mair completed her doctoral thesis at the Jamaica campus of the University of the West Indies (UWI). In 2006, it was published for the first time under the title *A Historical Study of Women in Jamaica, 1655-1844*; it was the first full-length work on Caribbean women's historical experience. In 1993, Verene Shepherd organized a symposium, also at the Jamaica campus of UWI, out of which emerged the collection of essays, *Engendering History: Caribbean Women in Historical Perspective*, published in 1995. These two events symbolized the development, from the early 1970s onwards, of a significant body of work on women and gender in the history of the English-speaking Caribbean; research and publication in the field have grown considerably between the mid-1990s and the present (Mathurin Mair 2006; Shepherd, Brereton and Bailey 1995; Brereton 2002, 129-44).

Introduction

In keeping with international trends, there has been a movement from the ‘women’s history’ approach to that of ‘gender history’ in this body of work. In the earlier phase, in the Caribbean as elsewhere, the focus was on recovering/retrieving information about women in past societies. The women’s history approach concentrates on women’s special historical experiences and insists on their centrality to the research: from women without a history to women in history, as Jean Stubbs puts it. The gender history approach, of course, tries to analyse significant differences in the historical experiences of men and women in a given society and chronological period; it concentrates on gender roles and ideologies, how they develop and are transformed over time, and how they help to shape historical change. This approach aims not only to ‘put women into history’—though this will always be the foundational spade-work—but also to redefine and reconstruct the historical narratives. In general, the work on the English-speaking Caribbean over the last 40 years has followed this progression from women’s to gender history, but in practice, of course, the two approaches are often combined, whereas, the need for the first approach, the ‘retrieval and recovery’ work, has by no means disappeared (Stubbs 1999, 95-135; Brereton 2002, 129-44).

Both types of historical investigation are embedded in the so-called ‘new’ social history which has dominated the discipline for many decades. Caribbean historiography has leaned more towards social history over the last 30 years, affecting research on virtually all the themes and periods, in particular, those pertaining to the post-Emancipation nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Many historians have probed the patterns of social formation in the different colonies, trying to tease out the interrelations between ethnicity, class and gender. The turn to social history has led to a focus on themes such as race relations, the construction of ‘race’ and ethnicity, social stratification, gender ideologies and their repercussions—often in the form of ‘micro’ studies of specific colonies or (at times) specific groups. More recently, one may detect a ‘cultural turn’, a focus on cultural history, studying the material and expressive cultures of past societies. Of course, this emerged out of—and is often indistinguishable from—the ‘new’ social history, and is also closely related to the discipline of ‘cultural studies’. Research into women’s historical experiences and the construction and significance of gender in the past, in the Caribbean as elsewhere, is part and parcel of the broader work on social and cultural history (Brereton 2006, 187-209).

In general, then, women’s and gender history in the English-speaking Caribbean has shared the concerns and forms of social scientific and ‘structural’ historiography. But one important counter-trend has been the continuing interest in writing the life stories of individual women of the region, especially, though not solely, those of significant leaders in public life. Biography as a historical genre, of course, lies at the opposite pole from ‘structural’ and ‘social-scientific’ approaches to the past; but it has always been an important methodology for women’s history, and is often more accessible to a non-academic readership. We now have well-researched biographies on, or volumes of essays about, such prominent twentieth-century regional women as Una Marson, Amy Ashwood Garvey, Amy Jacques Garvey, Edna Manley and Mary Seacole of Jamaica; Eugenia Charles and Phyllis Shand Allfrey of Dominica; Nita Barrow of Barbados; and Elma Francois, Claudia Jones, Nesta Patrick and Christina Lewis of Trinidad and Tobago—and

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this is by no means a complete list (Autobiographies, memoirs and diaries by Caribbean women will be considered as sources later in this article.) (Jarrett-Macauley 1998; Taylor 2002; Martin 2007; Brown 1975; Manley 2008; Robinson 2005; Higbie 1993; Barriteau and Cogley 2006; Paravisini-Gebert 1996; Blackman 1995; Barriteau and Cogley 2001; Reddock 1988; Boyce Davies 2008; Sherwood 1999; Joseph 2004; Cummings 2009).

This article will focus, not on the theoretical contributions or even the empirical findings of the body of work produced on women's and gender history in the English-speaking Caribbean, but on the sources and methods employed. It will argue that historians have used the full range of sources—and therefore of methods—typical of the 'new' social history. They have not, in my view, 'invented' new methodologies or utilized hitherto unknown sources; but they have asked new questions of those sources, brought different perspectives to bear on them, and extracted insights and information from them in which previous historians had shown little interest. In seeking to illustrate this conclusion, I will consider both those works falling explicitly into the category of women's and gender history and those which are more generally about social history but have much to say on women and gender. Needless to say, the examples chosen will reflect my own interests and my own reading, and will by no means adequately represent the full range of relevant published work which has appeared since the early 1970s.

Archival sources: Official records

History is an empirical discipline: its findings must be based on primary sources, traces or 'tracks' of past human activities and experiences which have survived to the historian's present. For nearly all studies of the post-Columbian Caribbean, the sources have been mainly written. Whether we like it or not, the document holds a privileged place in the historian's work; the archive largely shapes the scope and success of her investigations. And it has been official records, documents generated by government bodies or persons writing in an official capacity, which have dominated the archive, for the Caribbean as elsewhere. By the eighteenth century, the British and colonial governments had developed fairly efficient record-keeping systems, ensuring the survival and accessibility of a huge amount of official documentation. The sheer abundance, the relative accessibility, and the intrinsic value of all this governmental documentation have ensured the dominance of the official archive as the base for most Caribbean history writing, including social, women's and gender history.

Of course, this presents inevitable problems: the official view; the metropolitan eye; the white, male gaze may dominate the historiography. For all who research women's and gender history—or indeed, social and cultural history more generally—questions of interpretation and standpoint are critical. A conscious effort to decode, deconstruct and read against the grain, to extract usable data about people's real lives and thoughts from the archive, to tease out a subaltern history from perhaps unpromising sources, is always required. As Mathurin Mair wrote in 1974, historians were obliged to revisit the 'conventional sources' in order to open up 'new emphases and new interpretations relating to' the black Jamaican woman, and to decode the real world of enslaved and free women so as, eventually, 'to shift the parameters of traditional historiography' (Mathurin Mair 2006, 234-35).

One category of official documents which has been fruitfully mined in this way, by historians probing women's lives in the English-speaking Caribbean, comprises deeds, land patents, wills, inventories, assessment rolls and levy (tax) records. We can point to examples relating to Jamaica, Barbados and Tobago. Mathurin Mair was able to find the Jamaican Land Patent of 1740 which recorded the government grant of 500 acres to Nanny of the Windward Maroons and her people, establishing the 'historicity' of this famous, legendary personage, the only female National Hero of Jamaica. She used legal inventories in the archives to detail the extent of property ownership by Jamaican free coloured women during slavery, probing how they inherited land, slaves and other property, and how they in turn amassed wealth and bequeathed it to their children; and wills showed how white male Jamaicans disposed of their property among their wives, their legitimate sons and daughters, their non-white mistresses and their illegitimate, mixed-race children. For a later period, Veront Satchell based his detailed study of land transactions between 1866 and 1900 on 12,492 conveyance deeds, allowing him to probe the extent of female participation in Jamaica's land market in this period, and to track changes in that participation as the reviving plantations tried to concentrate land ownership in the hands of fewer people towards the end of the century (Mathurin Mair 2006, 62, 90-97, 152-55, 173-75; Satchell 1990, 3-10, 151-55).

Shifting to Barbados, two recent works have used similar documents to establish property ownership patterns among white and free coloured women during slavery. Pedro Welch considers the Barbados Levy (Tax) Books to be the 'best available source for tracing the fortunes of the coloured people', and he has used them to establish the property holdings of free coloured women, especially during the last decades of slavery, along with other legal documents. For the same period, Cecily Jones used deeds, wills and inventories to examine the extent to which white Barbadian women owned property, including enslaved persons, and actively participated in the property market. She succeeds in showing clearly that they were active participants in the colonial economy, despite the well-known legal restrictions on married women's rights to hold or control property independently of their husbands: single, married and widowed women all carried out property transactions of many different kinds, though widows were especially active. (Welch 2000, 13; Jones 2007, chapters 3 and 5)

In her magisterial study of Tobago, Susan Craig-Jones also utilizes wills to probe how free coloured and free black women inherited property and in turn bequeathed it. But especially impressive is her intensive study of the Tobago Assessment Rolls for 1881/82, which provide detailed information on female ownership of taxable property—the Rolls indicate the sex of the owner. (Overall, 30 per cent of all properties were owned by women, but they owned only 19 per cent of properties assessed at over two pounds and ten shillings, and only 16 percent of those assessed at ten pounds or above). Craig-Jones extracts from this very detailed source valuable data about the role of gender in the acquisition and utilization of land in post-Emancipation Tobago, which was becoming a mainly peasant economy by the 1880s (Craig-Jones 2008, 1, 44-49, 121-31).

Another category of official documents which have always been immensely valuable to demographic and social historians, and of course to those researching women and gender, is the colonial census. In the colonial British Caribbean, governmental censuses began in

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1844 or 1851 and continued to be taken, usually every ten years. Again, Craig-James has subjected the Tobago censuses to immensely detailed analysis, yielding a huge body of data about women's occupational and economic situation between 1844 and 1946. Women were well over half of the waged agricultural labourers in the late nineteenth century (58 percent in 1891 and 59 percent in 1901), but only 13 percent of persons recorded as 'skilled' were women in 1901. The census data show, Craig-James concludes, 'the extraordinary importance of low-waged female labour in Tobago's agrarian production in the century after Emancipation', giving 'major significance to gender as a factor interacting with social class for any meaningful analysis of Tobago society'. In their fine work on Jamaican social history between 1865 and 1920, Brian Moore and Michele Johnson use the censuses and the Registrar-General's Annual Returns to establish the empirical realities with respect to 'legitimate' versus 'illegitimate' births, and legal marriages, in this period (Craig-James 2008, 1, 278; 11, chapter 7, 187-202; Moore and Johnson 2004, chapter 4).

When slavery was formally abolished by Britain in 1834, Special Magistrates were appointed throughout the colonies to oversee the transitional 'Apprenticeship' scheme which succeeded slavery; when it in turn was ended in 1838, most continued in office under the designation Stipendiary Magistrates. These men often wrote very detailed, and very frequent, reports on conditions in their districts, most of which have survived, and in many cases these reports continued into the late 1840s. Their reports are probably the best single source for understanding the situation of ex-slave women after the end of slavery, their contestations with the planters, and their 'withdrawal' from plantation wage labour. The reports were indispensable, for example, to the research on these developments by Swithin Wilmot for Jamaica, and by myself on the British Caribbean generally. Mathurin Mair also used the 'SM' reports to probe the treatment of black Jamaican women during the Apprenticeship, concluding that 'the harassment of the black female became one of the most notable features of the first years of a free society'. For the Windward Islands, both Craig-James (Tobago) and Nicole Phillip (Grenada) used these reports to examine the strategies and actions of the freedwomen during and after the Apprenticeship (1834-38). (Brereton 1999, 77-107, 275-81; Wilmot 1995, 279-95; Mathurin Mair 2006, 307-09; Craig-James 2008, 1, 63-64; Phillip 2010, 42-45, 48-50)

In Jamaica and Barbados, where the Anglican Church was firmly established as the 'official church', the Anglican Vestry in each parish carried out many functions of local government. Their records (Minute Books and other papers), going back to the seventeenth century in some cases, can illuminate aspects of women's lives in the early period of colonization, especially white women. In her study of white Barbadian women, Jones used Vestry Minute Books for two parishes to probe how poor relief was administered to indigent white women. She argues that the Vestries, run by propertied white men, manipulated relief in order to regulate the sexual conduct of poor white women, to discourage them from unions with black men (free or enslaved), in the interest of the white patriarchy. Mathurin Mair also found that Jamaican Vestry Minutes and Proceedings shed light on the administration of poor relief to white women, who were the recipients of most of this relief—non-white (free) women rarely benefited from money grants ('outdoor' relief) nor were they admitted to the parish poor houses. Vestry records from St Michael parish, Barbados, in which Bridgetown is situated, were also a useful

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source for Welch in his examination of free coloured women in pre-emancipation society. (Jones 2007, chapter 1; Mathurin Mair 2006, 140-48; Welch 2000)

For historians in the tradition of the ‘new’ social history, records of law courts, trial transcripts or reports and related documents have provided a lens into people’s actions and beliefs in the past; crime and criminality can open up new insights into social and gender dynamics. David Trotman pioneered this approach for the British Caribbean with his work on post-Emancipation Trinidad; he was especially interested in how both Afro- and Indo-Trinidadian women were victims of crime, and frequently also deemed criminals before the colonial courts, in the second half of the nineteenth century. One historian who followed up this approach, applied to Jamaica both before and after Emancipation, is Jonathan Dalby, who utilized Jamaican Assize Court records as his main source. He considered patterns in the prosecution of sexual offences, and of domestic violence murders and assaults, especially in post-Emancipation Jamaica—clearly highly relevant to any analysis of gender norms in the society. For an earlier period, Mathurin Mair mined the records of the parish Slave Courts in the 1820s and 1830s, and the Kingston Court of Quarter Sessions between 1787 and 1812, for evidence of court-ordered punishments of enslaved women in Jamaica. And Verene Shepherd has used the evidence given to a special Commission of Inquiry, held in Guyana at the end of 1885 to probe the death of a young female Indian immigrant on board ship, apparently as a result of rape by crewmen, to consider the whole issue of Indian immigrant women’s exploitation in the nineteenth-century indenture system. Very usefully, she has reproduced most of this evidence as appendices to her book (Trotman 1984, 60-72; Trotman 1986; Dalby 2008, 2011, 2000; Mathurin Mair 2006, 223-25, 237-39; Shepherd 2002, appendices, 83-153).

Of course, there are several other categories of official or governmental records which have been fruitfully mined by many historians of women and gender in the Caribbean: Colonial Office correspondence, especially between the governors and the Secretary of State; reports from official commissions; official publications like the colonial Blue Books and Handbooks; papers and minutes of the colonial legislatures; laws; British Parliamentary Papers. But I hope I have done enough to show that the ‘conventional’ sources, the official records in the archives, can yield exciting insights and detailed empirical information about the lives of women in the past and the operation of gender. It is unlikely that the official records will be supplanted as the single most important category of primary sources for the history of the colonial Caribbean. But, as Mathurin Mair wrote so long ago, what matters is the determination of the historian to ask the right questions of the documents and read them against the grain.

Archival sources: Unofficial records

Undoubtedly, official or governmental records constitute the mainstream of primary sources for historians of the English-speaking Caribbean, because of their abundance, their relative accessibility, and their immense evidential value. But there are many types of written sources generated by non-official bodies, and of course by private individuals, which are of great value to historians, and have been frequently and fruitfully used by historians of women and gender in the region.

Newspapers are clearly one of the most important types of unofficial written sources—excluding here the government Gazettes which were not true newspapers but organs for governmental notices and other publications. The British Caribbean colonies possessed a lively and extensive newspaper press, beginning in the eighteenth century, but especially dynamic in the post-Emancipation period into the twentieth century. Articles, editorials, letters to the editor, advertisements of all kinds, serialized novels, short stories, poetry, and birth, marriage and death notices—these are only some of the material to be found in the colonial newspapers. They have proved to be tremendously valuable for historians of women and gender, especially but not only in the post-Emancipation period.

Moore and Johnson have edited two compilations of articles from the two leading Jamaican newspapers of the day which provide vivid and detailed descriptions of social and economic conditions in the colony as a whole in 1890, and in ‘squalid Kingston’ between 1890 and 1920. They are an excellent illustration of the value of newspaper sources, and naturally include considerable material on women’s lives. But it is their magisterial two-volume study of Jamaican society and culture between 1865 and 1920 which really proves how indispensable this source is for social and cultural historians of all kinds, including those mainly interested in women and gender. To focus on one or two examples out of many, Moore and Johnson describe the lively debate in the *Daily Gleaner* (Jamaica’s oldest paper, still going strong) on gender, proper wifedom, the ‘new woman’, marriage and female independence, which took place in 1904; and more generally, they use the newspapers to show how the ‘Victorian gender ideology’ was imposed on Jamaica through newspaper letters, articles and reports of speeches. Reports in the papers on court cases involving domestic violence and female misbehaviour like drunkenness, articles and letters describing how people of different classes celebrated births, deaths and marriages, newspaper coverage of Indo-Jamaican culture and life—all this and more, highly relevant to understanding women’s historical experiences in Jamaica—illustrate the value of this type of source material (Moore and Johnson 2000a and 2000b; Moore and Johnson 2004, 108-13, 137-40, 159-60; Moore and Johnson 2011, 57-61, 320-22, 375-81).

For the period of slavery, newspapers provide a wealth of material on the lives of enslaved women. Advertisements for runaway slaves have long been recognized as an important source, and Mathurin Mair was able to examine a series from 1791 to 1829 to probe to what extent women ran away, what kinds of women, why, and where they were hoping to go. Hilary Beckles and Barbara Bush also used this source for their studies of women in slave society. Though Tobago’s newspaper press was not substantial, Craig-James finds some useful data in the *Tobago News*, which struggled to survive in the last decades of the nineteenth century, about middle-class women’s occupations, including running guest houses. They were the pioneers of the island’s hospitality industry, she concludes. Melanie Newton studied early nineteenth-century Barbadian newspapers to show how philanthropy and charitable organizations were gendered, and how they contributed to constructing ‘proper’ gender ideologies in that island before and after Emancipation. For St Vincent, Sheena Boa has probed contesting views of culture and gender in Kingstown, in the post-Emancipation decades, using that island’s newspapers (Mathurin Mair 2006, 246-49; Beckles 1989; Bush 1990; Craig-James 2008, 1, 275-77; Newton 2005, 225-46; Boa 2005, 247-66).

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The records of the Christian churches which were active in the colonial Caribbean, especially from the late eighteenth century, have been very thoroughly mined by many historians, in particular for the closing decades of slavery and the post-Emancipation nineteenth century. Missionaries and clergymen of all stripes wrote copiously—to each other, to their superiors and the parent bodies in Britain, to their relatives at home—and much has survived in various public and church archives, mostly in Britain. Moreover, they were often close to ‘their people’ and were capable of shrewd observations, even if these were always coloured by ethnocentric and religious biases and prejudices. Mathurin Mair used these sources extensively; for instance, the records, correspondence and published narratives of the Wesleyan (Methodist) Mission shed light on the roles of free coloured women in the Jamaican congregations of this denomination. They were often lay leaders and significant supporters of the clergymen; but the latter were warned to beware of the temptations they represented, and legal unions between a white minister and even a ‘respectable’ mixed-race woman were frowned on. The London Missionary Society records for Jamaica in the 1830s also yielded valuable data about the clergy’s ideas on gender, the role of the missionary wives and teachers, and attitudes to Afro-Jamaicans’ practices relating to sex and marriage. (Mathurin Mair 2006, 287-90, 298-303)

Moore and Johnson used a very wide range of church records for their study of Jamaican social and cultural history after the 1860s: they examined those of the Anglicans, Methodists, Moravians, Baptists, Quakers or Friends, Roman Catholics (the Jesuit mission), Presbyterians, Church of Scotland and Congregationals. Evidence from this immensely rich collection on women’s lives and on the operation of gender ideologies is to be found all through their two-volume work, especially in their chapter on ‘Christianizing Jamaica’. Women were the majority of the church-going population in colonial Jamaica, and the special target both of evangelism, and of the wider moral mission to make them into decent, respectable, God-fearing wives and mothers. Taking a somewhat different line, Mimi Sheller used the reports of meetings, correspondence and petitions from the records of the Baptist and Methodist Missions to probe the construction of subaltern masculinities in post-Emancipation Jamaica (Moore and Johnson 2004, chapter 6, 167-204; Sheller 2005, 79-98).

Contemporary publications, including travel books, novels, ethnographic descriptions and general works about the islands, have always been recognized as valuable primary sources for social historians. Jamaica is especially rich in this regard, especially for the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and these sources are often full of insights into gender dynamics and the lives of women, notwithstanding the inevitable Eurocentric and (usually) male biases. Moore and Johnson make full use of this type of source in their social history of Jamaica between 1865 and 1920. One of the publications they cite frequently is *Black Roadways*, the pioneering ethnographic study of Afro-Jamaicans by the American anthropologist Martha Beckwith, published in 1929—a rare (at that time) academic text by a woman. Other female-authored books, which are especially rich in data about Caribbean women, include Mrs A. C. Carmichael’s text on her experiences as a planter’s wife in St Vincent and Trinidad in the 1820s, and Frances Lanaghan’s interesting study of Antigua society just after the end of slavery (Moore and Johnson 2004 and 2011; Brereton 1995, 63-93).

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One of the most important categories of sources for the history of Caribbean slavery comprises plantation papers, correspondence and accounts. Because so many plantation owners lived in Britain, their agents in the colonies wrote frequent reports about their properties, often including detailed accounts, inventories of assets including enslaved labourers, and similar information. In many cases these documents have survived and are now in various public and private archives in Britain. They yield rich data about enslaved women's lives and work. Mathurin Mair was the first to use these documents specifically to extract material about the enslaved women and the gender dynamics on the Jamaican plantations. It was on the basis of plantation papers that she established that women outnumbered men in the field gangs of Jamaica's sugar estates at least by the 1790s, for instance, and that female slaves endured chronic ill health under the punishing regime of gang labour. To take another example, the Holland House Papers, dealing with the several Jamaican estates owned by the aristocratic family of Lord Holland, were used by Mathurin Mair to probe the behaviour of women during the Apprenticeship scheme between 1834 and 1838. Phillip's study of enslaved women in Grenada utilized plantation papers, and she is unusual in also finding some estate records of the 1950s to 1970s as a source for examining the working lives of Grenadian women field labourers in this period (Mathurin Mair 2006, 198-210, 210-23, 306-07; Phillip 2010, 18-43, 83-87).

In writing women's history, researchers have been especially keen to find personal documents written by women—autobiographies, memoirs, diaries and journals, and family correspondence. Such sources have been central to the reconstruction of women's lives in the past. They are not abundant in the English-speaking Caribbean, certainly not for any period before the mid-twentieth century, but those that do survive are immensely valuable for providing what I have called 'gendered testimony': insights into aspects of female lives which are not generally written about by men, or in the official record. The autobiographical writings of Mary Prince and Mary Seacole have become well known, and so has the diary of Maria Nugent, the wife of the governor of Jamaica in the early 1800s. There are other such works, including unpublished collections of family letters by women, which have been used to provide this kind of testimony on the private and usually hidden aspects of female life, in different social and ethnic groups—though the majority of these letters, memoirs and diaries were, inevitably, written by upper-class, usually white women, or educated mixed-race persons like Seacole. Prince is the exception; her short memoir is the only account we know of written (actually dictated) by a former enslaved woman from the English-speaking Caribbean (Brereton 1998, 143-62).

Mathurin Mair was able to use some of these female-authored personal documents in her pioneering study of women in Jamaican slave society. Family letters by white Jamaican women, both Creole and British, allowed her to reconstruct the lives of upper class females during this period. For instance, a series of letters from an elite woman to her daughter in England, published in 1938 as *Letters to Jane from Jamaica, 1788-1796*, proved to be a valuable source, along with other similar but unpublished collections of letters by women. Family papers, containing letters by men and women, such as the Ricketts Family Papers, shed much light on the gender dynamics of plantation households; and diaries and letters of men were used to illustrate family relationships, conjugal affection, and attitudes to girls and women in this sector of Jamaican society. The diary of J. H. Archer, an early nineteenth-century pimento planter and country

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doctor, yielded interesting information about his mother's life as an active farmer and estate manager, who sometimes clashed with her son on slave management issues, including how to punish troublesome female slaves. And naturally Mathurin Mair frequently turned to the Nugent diary for insights into the private and domestic lives of white Creole women, including pregnancy and childbirth; Nugent herself provided a lively and much-quoted description of her first 'Creole confinement'. (Mathurin Mair 2006, 101-05, 117-19, 127-34, 167-69)

A unique type of personal document, heavily used by Moore and Johnson, is the collection of 312 essays written by Jamaicans from widely different social and ethnic groups. Known as *Jamaican Memories* and housed in the country's National Archives, these were submitted to the *Daily Gleaner*, in 1959. Contributors were asked to write on their memories of life 50 years ago. The essays provide rich data on gender and women's lives at the start of the last century (and, of course, on much else); they are comparable in many ways to transcripts of oral history interviews, except that the authors were all literate men and women (Moore and Johnson 2004 and 2011).

Oral history and oral traditions

The most important non-written sources for historians of women and gender in the English-speaking Caribbean have been oral history, and to a lesser extent, oral traditions. (The former refers to interviewing individuals about their personal recollections of the past; the latter to communally held knowledge, handed down orally over at least three generations.) While these historians certainly did not 'invent' the oral history methodology, nor are they by any means the only ones to use it, the oral record has always been especially important to those researching women's lives in the past. The reason is simple: until recently, in virtually all societies, far fewer women than men were literate, so that documents written by them have always been much rarer. Women spoke far more than they wrote. Moreover, the official archive, generated overwhelmingly by men holding positions of authority, usually has little to say about most aspects of women's lives in the past, especially those relating to family life, childbearing and raising, domestic work, and so on. The oral record can capture data on those aspects, and much else. Of course, there is a major limitation: oral history can only be employed when the period being studied is within the living memories of individuals now alive (or alive when the interview was carried out). We cannot interview enslaved women; the last women to come as adults from India as indentured immigrants have gone.

Many Caribbean historians have eloquently written, or spoken, about the need for oral sources to illuminate women's lives in the past. In a 1989 public lecture, Blanca Silvestrini pointed out that women were often ignored in the archival sources and their voices could rarely be heard in the documents. She urged us to utilize the oral history method, not merely to supplement other sources, or to obtain information, but so that the voices and the life histories could help shape the historian's discourse and interpretation. Her own work in interviewing women involved in Puerto Rico's famous needlework industry in the middle decades of the last century was offered as an example. In an important article published in 1995, Mary Chamberlain discussed some of the issues in the use of oral evidence in gender history. She suggested that women's spoken testimony and narratives of their lives may follow distinctly different patterns from those by men,

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patterns the historian must recognize and respect even if they seem at times ‘illogical’ or preoccupied with ‘trivialities’ such as feelings, affections or appearances. Chamberlain has followed up these insights with a body of important work based largely on oral history interviews of Barbadians living in Britain and at home (Brereton 2002, 131; Chamberlain 1995, 94-110).

Craig-James is among the many Caribbean social historians who have made the oral history method integral to their work. For her study of Tobago society, she conducted 96 interviews with elderly Tobagonians about their memories of the period 1890 to 1950. As she points out, ‘the basic problem with most of the written documents is not simply that they cannot answer the questions we ask, but that the majority of the population were excluded from having a direct input into their creation’, a statement even more true for women than for men. Much of the ‘significant information on the texture of social and cultural life in Tobago survives only in the oral record’, she concludes. Her oral history interviews are rich sources used throughout her two-volume study. Rhoda Reddock, in her pioneering study of women in twentieth-century Trinidad and Tobago, made considerable use of the oral history method. A younger historian who has studied the lives of Indo-Trinidadian women in the first half of the twentieth century, Shaheeda Hosein, makes much the same point as Craig-James when she notes that the rural women she studies appear ‘only as statistics’ in the official written records. Their ‘lived reality remained invisible within the discourse of traditional historiography’. Oral narratives were crucial to gain a rounded picture of the rural Indo-Trinidadian women, secured through conversations with persons who were 80 or older when interviewed in 1997–98, and who ‘came of age’ in the 1920s. ‘Through the use of oral narratives I was able to analyse the historical experiences of the women through their eyes and in their sphere: the private domain’, she writes, to show their real lives, previously either taken for granted, or seen as ‘not the stuff of which history is made’ (Craig-James 2008, 1, 20-22; Reddock 1994; Hosein 2011, 101-02).

Erna Brodber, the Jamaican novelist and historian, has brilliantly illustrated the value of oral interviews for illuminating social and cultural history, and revealing the multi-faceted operations of gender systems in the past. For her 1985 doctoral study on what she called the ‘second generation’ of free men and women in Jamaica, she conducted 90 interviews of men and women born between 1890 and 1910. The original transcripts are lodged with UWI’s Mona (Jamaica) campus, and have been used by historians such as Moore and Johnson. In 2003, Brodber published 24 ‘self-portraits’ of Jamaican men; she chose 24 interviews with men from her 90 accounts and published edited transcripts of them. Much was revealed in these accounts about Jamaican ideas of masculinity, fatherhood and gender in the first half of the last century. In 2004, she published a revised version of the doctoral thesis, based, as noted, mainly on the 90 oral history interviews. A more recent study of the small village where Brodber lives combines archival research with 17 oral history interviews with individuals as well as some group interviews. Her lead has been followed by Craig-James, who, it has been already noted, conducted 96 interviews with Tobagonians about their lives in the early twentieth century. While these interviews enrich the entire work, she devotes a whole long chapter to oral testimonies about peasant agriculture and trading in the first half of the last century. Most of these came from women, and they illustrate female roles in traditional Tobago peasant farming

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and the operation of gender in this vanished agrarian world. From these testimonies, Craig-James concludes 'there was a clear sexual division of labour in virtually every sphere of activity'. Some of the testimonies describe the unique Tobago system of barter, called 'exchange', which was dominated by the women who did most of this traditional cash-less trade between villages and districts, as well as trafficking in agricultural produce and livestock between Tobago and Trinidad (Brodber 2003 and 2004a and 2004b; Craig-James 2008, 11, chapter 2, 37-72).

The oral history method has been used extensively to research the life of indentured Indo-Caribbean women and their descendants in the post-indenture era. Since indentured immigration only ended in 1917, until fairly recently it has been possible to interview surviving immigrants and their children, the first post-immigration generation. The leader here has been Patricia Mohammed, whose fine book *Gender Negotiations among Indians in Trinidad, 1917-1947* combines archival and newspaper research with over 60 interviews with Indo-Trinidadian men and women, mostly carried out in the early 1990s for her doctoral thesis. (The original transcripts are in UWI's St Augustine, Trinidad, campus library). Mohammed's work has revealed the value of the oral history method, as well as making important theoretical contributions to gender history in the Caribbean. Younger historians researching Indo-Trinidadian women's history have followed Mohammed's lead. Sherry-Ann Singh, using oral sources, has shown how the *Ramayana* cycle of stories, and the folk theatre based on it, helped to shape the Hindu Trinidadian view of gender roles, especially 'proper' relations between husband (Rama) and wife (Sita). Halima Kassim, in her study of marriage and dowry in the Trinidadian Indian Muslim community, leaned heavily on oral history interviews, especially with women, and included 'conversational narratives' derived from them in her analysis. We've already noted that Hosein found oral interviews to be the most important source for her study of rural Indo-Trinidadian women involved in peasant agriculture and marketing in the early twentieth century. Based mainly on these interviews, her findings countered the traditional view that these women were largely subservient, passive and dependent. Rather, they revealed women who earned their own livelihoods, and often supported whole families, owned land in their own right, and in general exercised considerable independence in their economic, domestic and personal lives (Mohammed 2002; Singh 2011, 21-51; Kassim 2011, 52-97; Hosein 2011, 101-20).

Capturing oral traditions—as opposed to oral history interviews—to research Caribbean women's lives in the past has been more difficult, in practical terms. But two recent works by the anthropologist Jean Besson and the historical linguist Maureen Warner-Lewis tap into Caribbean oral traditions. Besson's book on the 'two histories' of Martha Brae, a village in Jamaica, consolidates and extends her many previously published articles on this area and on the evolution of the 'family land' system. 'Although oral tradition cannot be assumed to be an entirely accurate account of past events', writes Besson, 'combined with historical and anthropological research it can illuminate the past'. She taps into the oral traditions of several of Martha Brae's 'Old Families'; as one of their members told her, 'most of the history of the black people don't come in big log-book. They keep it themselves and grandparents told their children and grandchildren'. Her oral sources yielded rich material on gender within the family land system and on the lives of Jamaican peasant women (Besson 2002, chapter 5, quotations 159, 172).

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In her ambitious study of 'Central Africa in the Caribbean', Warner-Lewis utilizes 'oral records' of the descendants of enslaved or indentured Central Africans brought to the Caribbean: folktales, proverbs, songs, language and rituals, captured in Trinidad, Tobago, Jamaica and Guyana. Much of her data retrieved from oral traditions and testimonies illuminate the social, cultural and gender history of African-Caribbean people after slavery ended, and after Africans ceased to arrive in the region. Craig-James also taps into the rich oral traditions of Tobago people, overwhelmingly descended from enslaved Africans. In particular, she heard several very old folk songs, nearly all sung to her by women, who had long lost the context and significance of their words. Her research into the documentary record allowed her to 'explain' the meaning and historical context of some of these songs to the women who had learnt them from older relatives. Several of these songs, which are presented in Craig-James' text, deal with marriage, courtship, and 'proper' behaviour of girls and women (Warner-Lewis 2003; Brereton 2006, 196-97; Craig-James 2008, 1, 20-21, 66-67, 214-15, 282).

Other non-written sources

Visual sources—paintings and drawings, photographs, tombstones and statues, video and film—have long been recognized as valuable, especially for social history. Some historians have utilized them to probe gender history in the Caribbean, especially as they illustrate modes of dress and body and hair ornamentation. A useful article published by Glory Robertson in 1995 points to the importance of pictorial sources for nineteenth-century women's history in Jamaica; dress, she wrote, was 'a mirror of attitudes to women'. Her article includes several very revealing photographs of Jamaican women of different social and ethnic groups and probes what they tell us about changes in gender roles and social expectations of ladies and 'other' women. This lead was taken up by S. O. Buckridge, whose full-length study of 'the language of dress' in Jamaica between 1750 and 1890 depends heavily on photographs, paintings, drawings and postcards of women during that period. He sees the choices Jamaican women made about dress, and hair and body ornamentation, as revealing of their choices between 'resistance' (rejecting European modes) and 'accommodation' (accepting them). While this may be too rigid a dichotomy, his book certainly points to the value of pictorial sources for gender history (Robertson 1995, 111-22; Buckridge 2004, *passim* but specially 135-64).

Both Moore and Johnson, and Craig-James, respectively, in their fine studies of the social history of Jamaica and Tobago, enriched their work with many fascinating illustrations. In each of her two volumes, Craig-James has many wonderful paintings and photographs of Tobago worthies of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, including many of her oral informants. Moore and Johnson also include many illustrations, often showing women of different social classes and engaged in different (or no) occupations. Especially fine are the colour plates of Jamaican women painted around 1905 and reproduced from a book published in that year. Many of these illustrations, in both works, can be 'read' like a written document to reveal intricacies of class and gender operations. (Craig-James 2008, *passim*; Moore and Johnson 2004, plates between 156-57 and *passim*; Moore and Johnson 2011, 49, 52, 62, 66, 217, 286).

In a recent article, the anthropologist Kenneth Bilby has suggested that when we study Caribbean cultural history, we should 'move beyond one-sided modes of historiography'

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that depend exclusively on written forms of documentation'; we might use 'contemporary ethnography to overcome the limitations of written sources' and thus grasp otherwise inaccessible dimensions of traditional cultural forms (like Junkanu, the subject of his article). By using 'ethnographic methods', he believes he was able to grasp the spiritual foundations of what has become an ostensibly secular performance—something he could not have done if he had relied only on 'historical documents written by uncomprehending European observers' in the past (Bilby 2010, 180, 216-17).

The work by Besson, noted earlier, certainly succeeds in integrating anthropological or ethnographic approaches with those of history. She combines conventional archival research with oral history and oral traditions and her own painstaking, 'insider' ethnography conducted over many decades. Using all these sources and methods she is able to tell the 'two stories' of Martha Brae: the story of the plantation town founded in the eighteenth century, which is well documented in the colonial archive, and the story of the post-Emancipation peasant village, which is not. Also with regard to Jamaica, Diane Austin-Broos bases a book on Pentecostalism in that island on oral history testimonies, newspapers, anthropological fieldwork and participant observation, which she describes as 'ethnographic historical writing'. Her work presents a considerable amount of historical data on the Jamaican indigenous religious tradition from about 1860, and the place of Pentecostalism in that tradition after its introduction from the United States in the early 1900s. Since the great majority of the adherents to Pentecostalism in Jamaica were and are women, her study sheds much light on the intricate connections between gender and religion in Jamaica, and on the role played by these churches in Jamaican women's lives. The work by Warner-Lewis already mentioned combines the methods and approaches of anthropology or ethnography, history, and historical linguistics. (Besson 2002; Austin-Broos 1997, chapters 1 to 5; Warner-Lewis 2003)

A recent book on Jamaica by Diana Fox, an anthropologist, seeks to reveal how gender lies at the root of 'everyday life' there, how it is the 'cultural DNA' of Jamaicans' lived reality. In her efforts to understand the cultural history of her chosen fieldwork location (Frankfield in Clarendon), Fox seeks 'stories' about its history, collected from 'folktales', the archives, and 'cultural memory' (such as stories about Nanny, the Maroon leader). She believes that both oral traditions and ethnographic studies can help to write gender into history. Moreover, in her otherwise academic text, she includes 'personal narratives' from her informants. One of the writing strategies and methodological tools of the new 'feminist ethnography', she points out, is to present the stories of 'ordinary' people in their own words, showing how they negotiate gender, revealing the 'lived experiences' of gender. This collaborative process between researcher and researched, so salient in more recent ethnographical work, is usually impossible for the historian; but something like it can be achieved through using oral traditions, oral history interviews and ethnographic fieldwork to illuminate the cultural history of gender in a specific locality (Fox 2010, 1-13, 60-82, 123-37).

Conclusion

As Fox makes clear, more recent anthropology/ethnography has developed distinctive methods or approaches, influenced by feminism and post-colonial guilt about the close links between traditional anthropology and the imperial enterprise. The feminist

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ethnographer is concerned about self-reflexivity and the researcher's 'positionality'. She accepts that all scholarly findings are subjective; she searches for 'empathetic understanding' of her subjects; she aims at participatory and collaborative research with those she is researching. She employs writing strategies like personal narratives and life histories, she embraces multivocality, and she aims at a multi-authored text (ethnographer and research subjects). And these approaches and strategies have been widely adopted by feminist social scientists in general, I believe (Fox 2010, 1-26).

However, the case of the historian is different. Her major sources will always be mainly written and archival. Oral history cannot be used to study periods beyond living memory, and oral traditions are of limited use for most historians, and most fields of investigation. Ethnographic studies can be very useful but will rarely become a major source for historical research. Above all, most historians study people who are no longer alive, and this simple fact makes it difficult to adopt the approaches and strategies outlined briefly in the last paragraph. This of course helps to explain the attraction of the oral history method: it does allow the historian direct, unmediated contact with her subjects, and it does open the possibility of a 'multi-authored' text. But, to repeat: many, perhaps most, historians study periods too remote in time to make oral history feasible. 'Empathetic understanding' with the people she studies is, or should be, a given for all historians, and can hardly be seen as a specially gendered or feminist approach.

In my view, historians of women and gender, in the English-speaking Caribbean as elsewhere, have not developed any unique or special methodologies, nor have they 'discovered' any previously unused sources. Instead, they have utilized the full range of methods and sources typical of social and cultural history as it has developed over the last 50 years. They are particularly drawn to the oral history method, but they are hardly unique in this. What they have done is to ask new questions of the sources, read them consistently against the grain and with critical (feminist) eyes, chosen new areas for investigation, and insisted on different perspectives. In these ways they have changed Caribbean historiography and will continue to do so.

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Defining Women Subjects: Photographs in Trinidad (1860s–1960s)

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Abstract

This article proposes research methodologies for use in analysing photographs that represent and visualise women subjects of colonial Trinidad. Methodology has been developed on the basis of research undertaken into photographic material of the period in Trinidad from the 1860s to 1960s. The researcher encounters the historical photographs in the present, thus providing insight into the ways in which photographic technologies have visualised Trinidadian women and explores how these practices persist in contemporary visual culture.

Photography emerged as a mode of communication for ‘a developing capitalist *world order*’. No previous economy of visual technologies constituted a world order in the same sense, and it is from within this wider context that we may consider the complex creation, production and circulation of colonial photographs representing the woman figure. Photographic practice at the turn of the twentieth century was a contributive part of the imperial attempt to ‘unify the globe’ and equally became associated with the ‘myth’ of a universality of photographic language (Sekula 1981). Photographic practice contributed to a shift in the continuity of European ideas and thinking about the visualisation of the Other. Colonial photography determined the gendered construction of the colonial woman as subjected to heightened, fetishised, visual scrutiny.

Introduction

This article explores techniques and methods of the research process that are considered cornerstones to the analysis of colonial photographs of women. The first section, ‘Researching photographs as embodied and partial knowledge’, explores the articulation of the researchers’ perspective and viewpoint; ‘Postcolonial perspectives and visual representation of colonial women subjects’ examines the importance of visual analysis framed within the present conjuncture of postcolonial discourse; ‘Geo-political, historical and everyday contexts to photographic representations of women’ recognises the importance of site-specific historical and cultural contexts to the analysis of photographs; and lastly ‘Which photographs? Research choices—photographic genres and types’ is concerned with family photography as a genre, which is inextricably linked to the representation of women subjects.

Discursively contained in the article are two case studies as examples of textual analysis that, along with the reproduction of other images, reveal their complex and rich significations of women associated with the history of colonial Trinidad.

Researching photographs as embodied and partial knowledge production

Abstract from my Notebook of a Returnⁱ

As a school child and teenager in Guyana and Trinidad in the 1960s and 1970s, I became familiar with the illustrations published in our history and geography schoolbooks depicting the European ‘discovery’ of the Caribbean from the 1400s. [The year] 1492 was the key date from which everything else and all knowledge about the Caribbean seemed to flow. The black and white reproductionsⁱⁱ of woodcuts and engravings found in the schoolbooks were primary historic[al] references visualising the Caribbean. The illustrations were elaborate and fascinating for their detail and craftsmanship, whilst appearing grotesque and repelling for their content and depiction.

It wasn’t until the end of a secondary education in Guyana that I was introduced to the photographs of Indian indentured labourers featuring men standing in rows in the background, with significantly [fewer] women, usually squatting in front.ⁱⁱⁱ

*In 2000, as a researcher in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad, I found two key texts for secondary education Caribbean history studies in Ishmael Khan & Son’s bookshop on Henry Street, Port-of-Spain. The now familiar images (illustrations and photographs) of colonial Caribbean were reproduced, visualising both the ‘discovery’ of the Caribbean islands and ‘life’ under colonial rule. At the National Archives offices in St. Vincent Street, I was referred to *The Book of Trinidad* (1992) in which the image types had been reproduced. This time, some of the illustrations were ‘redrawn’ or re-fashioned sketches of the previously described paintings, engravings and etchings.^{iv} The following year in 2001, whilst researching the material and galleries of the National Museum and Gallery in Woodford Square, I came across more reproductions of the image types described—the pictorial history of the Caribbean as reproductions of the original*

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woodcuts, engravings, paintings and photographs, mounted and framed on display in the museum's exhibition rooms.

Referring to diary notes as a method of research is paramount to feminist approaches to visual analysis of photographs. It is through the research practice involving the autobiographical-personal notes and entries that we are able to make explicit our perspective and the position from which we speak; bring into consciousness the visual memories we evoke as we encounter each new photograph or image; contest the conventional rhetoric of history writing; and provide further insight into the ways in which we produce knowledge from photographs and other visual material. My research notes incorporate *but do not prioritise* a reflexive practice in researching photographs of Trinidad. By reflexive, I mean that I acknowledge and privilege an awareness of the visual material, whilst excavating and making known my relationship to the material. Photographs considered as *image types* place emphasis on the recurrent use of reproductions and emphasise the relationship between past pictorial conventions of illustrations and the iconic signs of photographs.^v Here I reflect a more visceral sense of how I encountered and recall historical imagery as someone from the Caribbean Diaspora. I recall imagery I have previously encountered and suggest the influence these have in considering the visual “tropes” of historical illustrations. I reflect on the contemporary reproduction of “image types” and how they give rise to questions of “authenticity” and “factual accuracy”. And I note the distinctive visualising practices that were developed for picturing different Trinidadian ethnic populations as they became the majority citizens of Trinidad.

The embodied action of research, the journey and the subsequent notes the researcher makes are inextricably linked, therefore, to the personal perspectives and memories she brings. A familiarity, *a priori* knowledge and the memory of photographs that are *much like the ones we are researching* haunt the ‘spectral’ dimension of the material being researched. We are deeply familiar with conventions of signs and concepts *a priori* of the photograph we are looking at. There is historical memory of the photograph where ‘*presupposed*’ and prior texts contribute to the question of its meaning and yet are not necessarily present in the photographs or imagery themselves.^{vi}

It necessarily involves an embodied awareness of the practice of research itself through a self-conscious and contested reflection on the materials and the places they are found in, such as the library, archive or family album. Autobiographical writing as diasporic ‘memory-talk’, to use Kuhn’s term, determines a differentiated research process through which to consider such historical photographs/imagery. This is inherent to questioning the assumptions often made about archives and records—that authority somehow comes from the documents themselves. Narratives involving memory and autobiography, instead, come *from having been there*, as Steedman (1986, 2001), Hirsch and Smith (2002), Alexander (2010), Kuhn (2007), and others remind us.

Overtly acknowledging the process of research also means to declare a partial vision at any one time and incorporates what Haraway (2002) proposes as a ‘situated’ vision to the material. The adoption of an autoethnographic research practice^{vii} that includes multidimensional and yet always partial perspectives has been pioneered by feminist

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historians, scientists, anthropologists and artists including Ahmed (2000), Chen and Minh-ha (1994), Fusco (2008), Haraway (2002), Minh-ha (1989), McGrath (2002, 2007), Pink (2001), Sandoval (2000), Seremetakis (1996) and Stoler (2002). Haraway continues, ‘vision is *always* a question of the power to see...the split and contradictory self is the one who can interrogate positionings and be accountable... the topography of subjectivity is multidimensional; so therefore, is vision.’ Those of us creating, engaging and researching visual projects, Haraway contends, have the responsibility of being consciously aware of the perspectives we adopt in dealing with the visual. This, I argue, is also particularly pertinent when considering colonial visual material and its association with racism, gender, privilege, fear, fantasy and representation of the colonial subject.

Postcolonial perspectives and visual representation of colonial women subjects

Researching photographs as representations of the woman figure involves considering the material as inherent to the colonial project, particularly in relation to race and privilege. It also involves reflecting on the material in the Foucauldian sense of the present moment, that is, as a researcher familiar with contemporary postcolonial discourse and perspectives. We engage with colonial photography through the contemporary postcolonial prism including Fanon’s seminal text on the psychological state of the black man; Sandoval’s writings on feminism and oppression; Said’s concept of Orientalism; Spivak’s proposition of the subaltern; Gilroy’s configuration of the black Atlantic; and Hall’s writings on difference. It is from this knowledge we are able to consider retrospectively how photographs portray the colonial woman plantation worker.

Postcolonial and contemporaneous approaches to exploring photographs— individually and collectively—are of primary importance to exploring the representation of women in colonial photography. This necessarily involves observing all things about the photograph, its context of production and reception—including the way the researcher encounters the collection in the archive—exploring the taxonomy of the photographic collection and closely researching the content, contexts and aesthetics of each photograph and of each photograph in relation to the next.

Of primary importance is that images are not only about how they look, but how they are looked at. Consideration can, therefore, be given to the women subjects in the photograph as well as to who is doing the looking. Representations of her visually uphold racial and gender difference as recurring tropes and markers of difference. Fanon’s seminal text (1986) *Black Skin, White Masks*, originally published in 1952, is significant in conceptualising the psychology between racism, colonialism and the scopic drive. Writers continue to critique and expand on notions of race, its relationship to colonialism and the scopic drive of the European that “fixes” and objectifies the racialised Other.^{viii} Bhabha (1990) proposes that this fixity and objectifying firmly embed the stereotyping process, suggesting the look as being particularly charged when it crosses the colour line because of its association with the regulation of sexual activity between black and white.

As a colonial process, photography contributed to the operation of repeatedly representing the colonial subject as primitive, childlike, mentally deficient and sexually charged or in need of civilising. Photography as a visualising technology for colonialism, I argue, partially fulfilled the (white) male psychic need to consign visually the black

body to a safer preserve. Research methods for textual analysis of colonial photographs of women, therefore, involve a ‘reading’ of the image as a form of representation of the colonial subject and acknowledge the active process and fetish involved in the ‘gaze’ embedded in photography. Photography as a signifying system involves what Burgin describes as a scene (the photograph) and the ‘*gaze of the spectator*’ or ‘a viewing subject’ (Burgin 1982, 146).

Analysis of women in colonial photographs also allows us to consider the construction of masculinity and, in particular, to acknowledge the predominance of the male gaze in determining the meaning of images of women. It is widely acknowledged that men historically (if not contemporaneously) have controlled the production of images. The scopis drive is typically considered to be a masculine one embedded with an entitlement to look at women, whilst women also watch themselves being looked at, as Mulvey (1996) and others have explored. This visualisation or objectivisation of women is, therefore, a consequence of the male colonial gaze. As McGrath describes, photography is most often embedded with a ‘heterosexual visual economy’ in which the ‘woman’s body...excites the hand and eye’ (McGrath 2002, 1). Willis and Williams (2002) also argue that the colonial traveller journeying to the colonies found that an ‘element in the picture-making process was undoubtedly the titillation of the photographers themselves, who were at least temporarily freed from the moral restrictions of their Western cultures’ (Willis and Williams 2002, 19-21), and who were exacerbated by a sense of liberation and *risqué*. Feminist historians, art critics, media and photography theorists—including Allouha (1987), Espinet (1993), McGrath (2002), Minh-ha (1989), Mohammed (1998), Reddock (1985, 1987, 1994, 1998), Shepherd, Brereton and Bailey (1995, Shepherd (2002), Willis (2010), Williamson (1984), and Young (1996)—have thoroughly explored the complex and recurring tropes deployed to signify or represent the woman figure, whether in popular culture, literature or photography. Young perceptively comments that ‘although black women were seen as “not-male,” they were not seen as women in the same sense that white women were. Since slavery, African females had been seen as at once women—inasmuch as they were sexualized, reproductive and subordinate—and not-women, that is not pure, not feminine, not fragile but strong and sexually knowing and available’ (Young 1996, 64).

The photographs representing women from the 1860s to the 1960s, found in Trinidad, mostly functioned and were purposed as colonial documentation, visual confirmation of what happened and what was there, imputing a currency of “truth” and unequivocal evidence to the events and records of the period. Their credibility, legitimacy, and value is assured through the archive and collection process that we find them in, whether these are collections found in official archives or personal collections. As photographs were most often taken by those in positions of authority, with the financial and ideological interest and power to envision the colony (colonial administration, landowning families, travelling photographers), they are imbued with the convention of historicising images as seemingly objective and transparent—a window through which to look.

From our present perspective, we are mindful of the original function and purpose of the photographs taken in the period: They may have been commissioned as evidence of an example of ‘good’ colonial governance, or privately commissioned by plantation owners

to signify and represent their wealth in the colonies, or merely taken by travel photographers as postcards to encourage tourism and exploration of colonial landscapes, or to sell as portraits to families who could afford it. Photographic technologies contributed to the visual perception and clear distinction between the colonised and the coloniser. Methodology for visual analysis, therefore, necessarily involves seeking the origins of production, who commissioned the photograph, who took the photograph, to what end were they taken, as well as prioritising and noting gender-specific influences involved in the creating and staging of the photographs.

The exploration of photographic technologies, the development of photographic conventions and how they influenced the portrayal of colonial women subjects are invariably also important as methods for analysis. The early and rapid development of photography technologies from the 1850s to 1930s meant photography emerged as a significant part of a European visual economy with a compulsion to order and a desire to dominate world populations alongside those considered the ‘enemy within’. The European visual economy or visualising science during this period scrutinised in forensic detail the habits and physiognomy of all others but the ‘normalised’ European male figure.

Under the guise of advancing medical knowledge, discovering the empire and its races or policing the state, photography was put to work in envisioning women, non-European races, those considered abnormal mentally or physically, and those considered a danger to social order. Critics and writers researching photographic collections from the 1850s onwards—at a time when photography emerged as a commercial and popular medium—have established a photography discourse of collections *in relation to* conceiving photography as social acts. Most notably, these include Sekula (1986) on Bertillon and Galton’s work of exploring social deviance and scientific policing; Tagg (1988) on prison and police archives; Taylor (1994) on the Kodak phenomenon; Willis and Williams (2002) on the black female body in a range of photographic archival material; McGrath (2002) on medical images of women from the archives in Scotland; Thompson (2006) on exploring photographs from tourist campaigns in Jamaica and the Bahamas between the 1890s and 1930s; Rose’s (2010) writings on family photography in public and domestic spaces; and Camp’s (2012) consideration of archive photographs of the African Diaspora in Europe.

These writers explore the ways in which photographic techniques and conventions helped determine their societal function. In approaching the photographs, much consideration is given to how the photographs are received, who they were made for (whether as police records, photographs associated with tourism and travelling, or medical visualisation) and who would have seen them at the time.

Case Study 1 explores an image found in the National Museum of Trinidad and Tobago archives.



Illustration 1: Anon. (unknown). *Untitled (Standing on either side)*^{ix} Laser copy: Port-of-Spain, The National Museum and Art Gallery of Trinidad and Tobago.

Geo-political, historical and everyday contexts to photographic representations of women

As in the case study analysis referred to earlier, methods for analysing photographic representations of women involve researching the historical contextual narratives from which emerge the visual depiction or the *mise en scène* of the photograph. Visual representations of place, people and events are better understood as set within historical contexts from which cultural identities and perspectives emerge and are set within the topology and terrain of specific locations, often involving scenes from the vernacular and everyday. The portrayal of women during this period is conceived in the case study as associated with everyday plantation space, whether the location be the domesticated space of the plantation house or the field. We are mindful, for example, of plantation labour systems during this period as creating and sustaining gendered divisions of labour, devastating familial relationships and instituting racial hierarchies.

Illustration 2: Kempadoo, Roshini. (2006) “Mrs. Procope's family photographs”. Port -of-Spain.



The geo-political history of Trinidad, like many ex-British colonial Caribbean islands, is constituted from a history of plantation economies and colonial rule and, as such, has both common and highly distinctive historical narratives that might be associated with the island. Analysis of photographs of early colonial Trinidad with its majority population of mostly ex-plantation workers is further complicated by a unique history inextricably linked to the plantation labour system. That history includes a smaller percentage of slaves making up the overall Trinidad population than in other British colonial Caribbean islands; a noticeable percentage of “coloured” and “black freedmen” and various changes in colonial rule involving Spain, France and Britain;^x an indentureship (and British) labour system as a substitute form of labour after slavery that brought a significant Indian population from Calcutta and Madras;^{xi} an ever-changing mixed economy that transformed the dependency on cultivating sugar to include coffee, cocoa and citrus trade; a rapid urbanisation and industrialisation of the country’s economy due to Trinidad’s natural resources of petroleum (crude oil, natural gas, petrochemicals)^{xii} in the San Fernando area, southwest of the island; and the island’s being perceived by the US as a strategic military base located close to the Americas. Wider historical contexts pertaining to Trinidad’s history may be drawn from closely examining the detail of photographs for stylistic conventions associated with colonial woman subjects, including dress code, composition of the photograph, posture, the ‘gaze back’ from subject to photographer/viewer, and *mise en scène*. The photographic depiction of informal historical detail of the everyday provides exciting visual clues with which to research the wider particular history of the island and its women populations.

Which photographs? Research choices—photographic genres and types

Photographs taken in everyday life, snapshots in particular, rebelled against all of those photographic practices that reinscribed colonial ways of looking and capturing the images of the black ‘other’... these snapshots gave us a way to see ourselves, a sense of how we looked when we were not ‘wearing the mask’ ...

hooks, b. (1994, 50-51)

Photographic genres and types of photography chosen for the research process are crucial to expanding a visual analysis that explores women represented in colonial Trinidad. Where are representations of colonial women to be found? What genre might they be associated with and what were their purpose and function at the time they were created?

Case study 2 explores a portrait from a High Street photographic studio.



Illustration 3: Anon. (unknown). “Untitled 3”. Photograph: Port-of-Spain: Mr. Dalla Costa, Film Processors Ltd.

Finding photographs representing women requires deep and forensic research that includes informal and formal archives.^{xiii} Colonial photographs are most often visually dominated by the European men as owners/colonisers of the island, whilst the postcolonial visual trope has emerged from the image and narrative of the liberated male ex-slave as an independent and free citizen. Photographs of women from the majority population of ex-colonial workers of Trinidad end up supportive and subservient to these twin visual narratives. Family album collections and high street portraits as informal archives are important and fruitful sources for photographs depicting women in opposition to and in dialogue with official national history. There is a long genealogy of feminist writers and photographers including Azoulay (2008), Spence and Holland (1991), Hirsch (2012), Kuhn (2002), Langford (2008), Rose (2010), Stoler (2002), Thompson (2006) and Willis (2005). They have explored the relationship between domestic or family photography as a genre and its value and importance as a genre to visualising women. In an analysis, then, of the domestic image that may include portraiture and self-portraits, documentation of social occasions and events including weddings and other civil ceremonies such as graduations or birthday celebrations, snapshots and family archives of earlier generations, we may be able to focus on women’s presence in photography. We can also pay further attention to other aspects that are symptomatic of this type of photography and its conventions, including the examination of gendered postures, questions of intimacy and displays of power, power relationships between photographer and the photographed, questions of civic duty and responsibility, as spectators exploring the photographs, and the inherent relationship between maintaining familial togetherness and the mobility of photographs (Rose 2010).

Formal portraits that are created as valuable family documentation are mostly curated and managed by women. The portrait found in Mr. Costa’s collection is symptomatic of a genre and photographic type that extends the way in which women had photographs taken of themselves. In engaging with different genres of photography—in this case the portrait—the researcher is able to examine and explore a differently negotiated envisioning practice.

Conclusion

The 1860s–1960s saw photography emerge from Europe that was within what Batchen suggests was the ‘peculiarly modern arrangement of knowledges’, (Batchen 1997, 186) and what Young describes as a ‘compulsion to order and construct taxonomies’ (Young 1996, 48). Researching and analysing different kinds of colonial photographs including high street portraits; family snapshots; formal social portraits; and other local photographers’ contributions become important counterpoints to the long history of envisioning women in the colony. As photography became popular and more readily available by the 1920s onwards, we are able to find photographs that reflect an emergent consciousness of liberation and citizenship. As women historians have pieced together the presence and action by women in colonial documentation, so too, the researcher is able to find alternative visual practices where women were able to partially or fully determine and control their own image.

Kempadoo, Roshini. 2013. Defining Women Subjects: Photographs in Trinidad (1860s–1960s). *CRGS*, no. 7, ed. Kamala Kempadoo, Halimah DeShong, and Charmaine Crawford, pp. 1-14.

A ‘postcolonial perspective’ and research process for exploring Trinidadian (or Caribbean) women subjects in photography, therefore, necessarily must take into consideration photography’s purpose and function as inherent to colonialism. Postcolonial perspectives of colonialism include geo-political explorations specific to the locale of Trinidad; photographic and archive theories of visualisation, typification and visual tropes; feminist approaches to research and knowledge; and acknowledgement of embodied and partial perspectives. Analysis of women subjects in photographs of colonial Trinidad emerges from reading against the grain (Stoler 2009) of the photographic archive in order to envision these women’s presence in history.

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ⁱ The subtitle refers to my research notes and makes reference to Aimé Césaire's *Notebook of a Return to My Native Land*, first published in 1939.

ⁱⁱ Notable early illustrators, painters, and engravers of Caribbean and American events included Théodore de Bry (1528-1598); Agostino Brunias (1730 – 1796); and Antonio de Herrera (1601 – 1615). These have also been referred to in Patricia Mohammed's publication in 2009 entitled *Imaging The Caribbean: Culture and Visual Translation*. De Bry and de Herrera, ironically, did not travel to the 'New World' but relied on accounts and journals from the explorers to make interpretations about the voyages and details of what were found there. While the reproductions in the school texts mostly appeared in black and white, many of the originals were in colour, particularly the oil paintings of the later period.

ⁱⁱⁱ Several Caribbean scholars, including Samaroo Dabydeen (1987, 1996), Birbalsingh (1993) and Tinker (1974), have written extensively about the Indian indentured system in Trinidad and British Guiana. This includes details of the first ships carrying indentured labourers, the *Whitby*, which sailed from Port Calcutta to British Guiana on 13 January 1838, and the *Fatel Razack*, which left Kolkata on 16 February 1845 and landed in the Gulf of Paria, Trinidad, on 30 May 1845.

^{iv} The redrawn reproductions of etchings and engravings in Brereton and Besson's text *The Book of Trinidad* (1992) are credited to Shim. The book of some 424 pages contains an extensive number of black and white, and sepia-toned reproductions of photographs, illustrations, maps and written accounts, with an average of at least two reproductions per page. The title makes reference to a previous publication of the same name that was an album of photographs of Trinidad produced in 1904 and edited by T. B. Jackson. A digital edition of Jackson's book is available online as part of the NYPL Digital Gallery of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Libraries Division. See *The Book of Trinidad*, edited by T. B. Jackson, NYPL Digital Gallery (2004-2007). [Internet database] New York: Available from

<http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/dgkeysearchdetail.cfm?trg=1&strucID=577982&imageID=1229412&parent_id=440047&word=&snum=&s=¬word=&d=&c=&f=&sScope=&sLevel=&sLabel=&total=34&num=0&imgs=12&pNum=&pos=1> (Accessed 12 March 2007).

^v Lister and Wells' (2001) writing is helpful in considering the notion of image typification and its close relationship to the signification of photography. Referencing Baxandall's analysis (1988) of a fifteenth-century woodcut, they trace the way meaning is attributed to a pictorial image in which 'a certain kind of mark has been matched (and agreed by all who can understand the convention...) with a certain kind of object or quality of objects in the real world' (Lister and Wells 2001, 72). This is the way that the concept of a (pictorial) convention 'is extended to that of a "code"—an extended system of signs which operates like a language' (Lister and Wells 2001, 73).

^{vi} We are deeply familiar with conventions of signs and concepts *a priori* of the photograph we are looking at. Burgin introduces the term 'complex "intertextuality"' to refer to the condition of the photograph that 'engages discourse beyond itself' where '*presupposed*' and prior texts that are very much taken for granted contribute to the question of its meaning and yet are not necessarily present in the photograph itself (Burgin 1982, 144).

^{vii} For further information on autoethnography as a concept in approaching research, see Pratt (1991) and Russell (1999).

^{viii} Among such works on stereotyping and the notions of race as they relate to literature and visual culture are *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race and Madness*, by S. Gilman (1985). *Fear of the Dark: 'Race', Gender and Sexuality in the Cinema*, by L. Young (1996). 'Reframing the Black subject', by O. Enwezor (1997), in *Trade Routes: History and Geography*, the catalogue for the 2nd Johannesburg Biennale; 'The Other Question: Difference, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism', by H. K. Bhabha in *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures* (1990), edited by R. Gever Ferguson, T.T. Minh-ha, and C. West; F. Vergès' 'Creole Skin, Black Mask: Fanon and Disavowal', *Critical Inquiry* Vol. 23, no. 3, 1997, pp. 578-95 and *Monsters and Revolutionaries: Colonial Family Romance and Métissage* (1999),

^{ix} This is a title I provided to describe the photograph. The original found in the gallery was a laser copy.

There was no original to refer to, no title, no date or any contextual documentation such as an index card.

^x Coloureds (also known in French as *gens de couleur* or *affranchis*) and black freedmen were colonial categories or a process of 'racial accounting' that was used by the British. The first term referred to the population of mixed race who may or may not have been enslaved, the second referred to those of African descent who had acquired manumission or were free from bondage.

^{xi} Indian indentured labourers soon dominated the plantation labour force in Trinidad. As Brereton notes, by 1872 'they constituted 75.3 per cent of the total sugar estate labour force; in 1895 the proportion had reached 87 per cent' (Brereton 1979, 178).

^{xii} Trinidad's industrial base now accounts for some 40 percent of its GDP. These statistics are based on figures available for 2002/2003 and 2005 from the International Energy Agency: Data Services. See OECD/IEA. (2006). *Share of Total Primary Energy Supply in 2004: Trinidad and Tobago*. <http://www.iea.org/Textbase/stats/countryresults.asp?COUNTRY_CODE=TT&Submit=Submit> (Accessed 10 February 2007). And OECD/IEA. (2006). *Evolution of Total Production of Energy from 1971 to 2004: Trinidad and Tobago*. [Internet]

< http://www.iea.org/Textbase/stats/countryresults.asp?COUNTRY_CODE=TT&Submit=Submit > (Accessed 20 February 2007).

^{xiii} I conceive of formal visual archive material as characterised by qualities that include photographs owned and administered by local, national, or regional institutions; photographs constituted officially and that have a system of access to professional researchers and in some cases the general public; and photographic collections conserved by professional archivists including curators, official administrators and librarians. Informal visual archive material is defined as photographs owned, administered and conserved by private companies or individuals whose access, publishing and use are subject to individual discretion and corporate decisions.



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Red Thread's Research: An Interview with Andaiye

Kamala Kempadoo

Abstract

In January 2013, on a visit to Georgetown Guyana, I had a special opportunity to interview Andaiye about research by the women's organization Red Thread. Andaiye is a co-founder and organizer of Red Thread, as well as an internationally renowned activist for working women's rights. While aspects of her work with Red Thread have been covered in various media, I hoped through the interview to hone in on her perspective of the roles and meanings of research in the organization's activities and to add to the documentation of Red Thread's unique experience with research. During the interview, Andaiye repeatedly stressed that she did not have all the information and that certain details needed verifying by other members of Red Thread. After the interview she filled in and elaborated on the transcript as much as possible. The following, then, is an example of a mixed method for documenting history and practice, incorporating a great deal of reflection and some dialogue, and bringing to light yet another dimension of the Red Thread story.ⁱ

Kempadoo, Kamala. 2013. Red Thread's Research: An Interview with Andaiye. *CRGS*, no. 7, ed. Kamala Kempadoo, Halimah DeShong, and Charmaine Crawford, pp. 1-17.

Red Thread has remarkable experience in doing its own research. You mentioned before there were three different phases in the development of the research. What name do you give those phases, how do you identify them, and what characterizes them?

I think what I really meant was that there've been three phases in the development of Red Thread, and that the kind of research we've done, our reasons for doing it, and how much it's been part of our organizing are inseparable from those phases. The identification of the phases can't be via the research in the first place. Because I believe that our research changed fundamentally in our third phase, and that doing it changed us, I want to focus on that phase after briefly describing the other two.

The first phase was the income-generating phase... From 1986, when we were formed, all the way through to about 1992–93, our main aim wasn't building an organization; it was to build an income-generation project which could provide reasonable income for a few hundred women. That's what women we were in contact with asked us to do; they said they weren't interested in "politics" (we were all then associated with a political movement, the Working People's Alliance [WPA]);ⁱⁱ they needed income. But the notion of doing an income-generation project alone drove us crazy... Later on all of us came to have a lot of respect for the income-generating part of our work, but in the beginning some of us were very mortified that we were doing this. We had some clear political ideas that we took with us into Red Thread. Since we were all committed to working with women across race, we based ourselves in urban and rural communities that were Indo-Guyanese, Afro-Guyanese, or Indigenous. Also, we all believed that women should not be organized into arms of political parties; that if we organized that way our interests would never be central. Red Thread was therefore independent of the WPA; we never reported to the party on what we were doing. We also never asked any woman what party she supported or if she supported any party at all.

What Red Thread did from the very beginning always tended to be creative and innovative. This stage was led, I would say, by four of the founders: Jocelyn Dow, Bonita Harris, Vanda Radzik and Danuta Radzik.ⁱⁱⁱ Many women who joined already had embroidery skills, but I remember Red Thread bringing in artists we knew to talk about design and colour. We used the embroidery the women made to sell, and for them to tell the stories of their work and culture. This process was a kind of research which opened up conversations across race/cultural divides; they were what Jocelyn calls "trigger-points". The other research we did in this period, three oral histories of Indo-Guyanese sugar workers—Rookmin, Etwaria and Indra—were recorded in booklets by Danuta and then "translated" into a slideshow by Karen de Souza, another founder and later, coordinator of Red Thread, who had the same aim. These were to be followed by stories of other women. So we never did "only" the income generation, but our perspective on what more we had to do could be described as "consciousness raising", which is the opposite of our perspective now.

Phase 2 began in about 1992–93, and what had brought Phase 1 to an end was that we stopped the income-generating. It wasn't economically sustainable. This changed us in many ways. Naturally, a large number of women moved away [from the organization] since their primary interest had been income, and what remained in Red Thread was a

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small, hard core of women, one of whom recently told me that she stayed (and she thought the others did too) because she couldn't bear for Red Thread not to exist for two reasons. One was that she'd learned something that she wanted to tell other women, and the second was that when she wasn't at Red Thread she felt she was missing something: Red Thread was a place where you could express what you were thinking and feeling, a place which said you didn't have to follow the tradition of what women were supposed to do and be, and a place where you discussed the why of events and developments in the country that you didn't fully understand, the why of your experience—the overwork, the violence, the no money, the family stress and conflict—which she'd never heard explained before except from a religious point of view.

By Phase 2, of the seven co-founders only Karen and Vanda were still active, Vanda running a Red Thread press we'd started. Another founder had migrated, I was away ill for a long time, and the others were doing other work. Each one followed her particular passion, for example, Bonita worked almost completely on ending violence against children. The bond the core developed with Karen in this phase was fundamental to their commitment to Red Thread's survival for years.

In Phase 2, Red Thread did research on domestic violence and reproductive health (two issues but one questionnaire) and sex work, which you (Kamala) were in some way involved in as well. It seems to me that in that phase, the impetus for research came from Karen, or sometimes from somebody else—Linda [Peake], or you—*with* Karen.^{iv} Linda was doing her own research when she first trained Red Thread and other grassroots women to do fieldwork; the Red Thread women included Karen, Joycelyn Bacchus, Halima Khan, Vanessa Ross, Chandradai Persaud and Nichola Marcus. They then did some more training and research before embarking on the domestic violence research, which was a Red Thread project. Although it was initiated by Karen it was pushed by the other women, not least because it contributed to an incredible and far-reaching initiative they'd started—led by one woman, Cora Belle^v—to buy our own centre. Women gave up their stipends for a year to achieve this! The payment for the domestic violence project was donated to that fund. Linda donated the fee that the funding agency allocated to her as chief researcher, and others gave most of the much smaller amounts which the agency allocated to them. The connection with our other work was that we'd done numerous community workshops on domestic violence and had written, recorded and aired a radio serial on domestic violence. With the sex workers, we did three pieces of research: one was a sero-prevalence survey which we did for the Caribbean Epidemiology Center, CAREC (which I don't think we should have done), and another was a needs assessment—what problems they were facing from police harassment, robbery and rape, physical and verbal abuse from clients, and pressure from families and religious bodies, and how they could address these problems; out of this we proposed to them that they form a group, and they did form a group which worked with G+ (Guyanese People Living with HIV and AIDS). But I don't think that we had worked out at that stage how to use research in order to strengthen organizing—women's self-organizing. It's at Phase 3 that it seems to me to change.

I think we can see a line of continuity between the research in Phases 1 and 3—both were about women telling stories about their lives, but in spite of the similarities, there's also a

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big difference. It's at Phase 3 that we begin to go for information on "what life is really like for us down here"^{vi} for grassroots women.

Phase 3 is to me, then, the interesting phase—the phase at which research becomes organizing. But I'm getting ahead of myself, so let me do the politics first. I've heard it suggested that the relation between Red Thread and the Global Women's Strike, which came out of the Wages for Housework Campaign, is limited to me. The reality is quite different. I had met them [the Campaign] ever since. I went on a church occupation in London with them^{vii}, and we worked together in Beijing^{viii}. What happened first with Red Thread was that when I told the working-class women—I used the phrase that came from [Selma] James—that housework was the production and reproduction of labour power, I was about to explain what that meant when their faces lit up. And the thing that came to my mind was Walter Rodney once telling me that over and over again he had taught students at university level the Marxist principle that workers produce surplus value, and they would take one month, two months, three months, four to understand this. Then he went to Linden [the bauxite mining town in Guyana] and he said basically, "Yuh'all does produce surplus value" and he said the response was "Yes, right. Next"—meaning that what he had done was to uncover a fundamental truth about their lives, which they therefore "knew" at some deep level—and that's the response I got from Red Thread when I said that they produced and reproduced labour power. They really understood it.

A piece of it was pride that somebody feels that all that stuff which you do is actually work and is not being dismissed. But the thought that this "thing"—I mean capitalism is not a word that Red Thread working-class women would use, but it's thrown around in front of them—the thought that capitalism has at its foundation their work was "empowering"; they liked it. Let me just say that: they liked it. Later they said that it was one of the things they remembered from Phase 1, that occasionally I talked about counting women's work. And at that stage it wasn't connected to a Red Thread politics and we weren't in touch with the strike. We just talked about counting women's work, which of course I'd got from the strike.

This was in the income-generating phase?

Yes, and in that phase, another of the founders, Jocelyn (Dow) often did discussions with the women on valuing their labour, although she and I never even talked about where her head was going with that, I just knew it was something she talked about a lot—valuing labour, valuing the resources around you, was her phrase, "the resources around and in you"—the resources in the environment and the resources in your own labour. She was very concerned that when people were pricing things they always started with the point at which something was being produced; for example, in Indigenous communities the women would never count the labour of gathering the materials that were going to be turned into a product. She wanted them to know that they had to put a price on these "free" resources and this "free" labour. So that had been there from the very beginning, but not put forward as "this is going to be THE politics" or anything. Maybe the best way to put it is that the whole question of invisible and unwaged work was a thread in what we were doing and saying but not yet fundamental to it.

But in Phase 3, the time-use survey was seminal; although, of course, we didn't fully understand in advance what we would find and where it would take us. It was seminal, but at the same time, they [Red Thread women] couldn't bear the process of doing it. The four women who did it were all working class, two Indo-Guyanese, two Afro-Guyanese: Nicola, Halima, Jocelyn and Chandradai. It was hard to do... They did the most painstaking thing, which is diaries. First, they did their own for practice, and then they went to other women. In some cases they felt that the women were able to make their own records, and in other cases they felt they had to make the record. One of the reasons for them sometimes doing the record, apart from the obvious ones like literacy and women forgetting the details of their work, and so on, was that by then we had talked about things such as simultaneous activities—what people call multi-tasking—and “ordinary women” don't know that they do that. So that when they looked back at a diary recorded by somebody who was recording herself, it would not be there—the fact that at the same time she was cooking she was also doing whatever else, minding the child, and so forth. That was one reason. And the other thing they had been very attracted by, which other people were not looking at, was what Selma called emotional housework. And none of that would be recorded by women normally. The Red Thread women were very excited at the notion that one was supposed to count all that worry, they would say, “all dat worrying because de money cyan' do”—all of that—the placating of the man, if there was a man, care of the child, holding the relationship together, and so forth.

They were counting emotional labour too?

Yes. Everything in life that had most burdened them, and they thought burdened just them, was now to be counted. So it was a pain in the ass...

How was it counted, in terms of hours, minutes?

The duration of each task was counted by the minute or by the hour and minute, depending on the task. I know nothing about scientific research. I doubt that we had the skills to do what people would call a scientific piece of research, although all of the core except me had been trained to do research during Phase 2. But there's a woman in the International Women Count network, of which I'm a member— Solveig Francis—who has long been the person that would deal with statistics, and so on, who was becoming experienced in the methods of counting women's work. Along with Selma, she helped design the time-use survey and as it was being administered she helped whenever asked. But this was, without any question, their baby—Jocelyn's, Chandra's, Halima's, Nicola's. You know, Solveig is not here (in Guyana), and this was pre-Skype, 2000 to 2001. Then, they were often out of town, far from where Karen and I were. So they worked problems out as they came up. Until that moment it's theory.

So, the women were very engaged and completely wrapped up in doing this.

I want to be fair to what happened. They got completely wrapped up in and fed up with the entire process, which they found really, really, really hard. Really hard. I mean let's face it, it was a very burdensome thing that they were doing... They were in tears some days, because of all kinds of things: having to babysit and do housework for women

whose time use they were doing so the women could be partly freed to do the diary, having to go back to the same house four or five times only to be told in the end that the woman wouldn't do the diary, usually because the man had objected, having to do the diaries hiding from husbands and partners who didn't want the women to do them, the men who shouted at them—I can't remember the stories, they all tended to be so dreadful—having nowhere to sleep, being bitten by swarms of mosquitoes, being bitten by centipedes, they found the thing awful to the point where it was often clear that they had lost sight of what it was about. In some Indo-Guyanese communities people were afraid of the Afro-Guyanese women and even if they did the diaries they were tense and fearful. Who else but grassroots women would have persevered through this whole process!

Who designed this method of doing research?

There were two or three methods that people were developing of how to do time use, and diaries was the one we chose. That's the one that we, not Red Thread alone, but with Solveig and Selma, chose, as making sense. It was also the one that made most sense for grassroots women—both those doing the research and the women whose time use they were researching. When the diaries were finished, they sent what they had to Solveig, who was beside herself with excitement...

They had recorded everything!

(Laugh) It just became “we did this thing!” Then you're hearing what you had hoped to be hearing all the time, about what it is that they were learning, what they were seeing, how much they were seeing the samenesses of women's lives, how much they were also seeing differences in women's lives depending upon race, depending upon which part of the country you came from, depending upon whether they had electricity or running water—what some might call obvious things. But the point is that nobody told them, they uncovered it for themselves. And they uncovered more than what was already known because they were grassroots women engaging grassroots women.

One of the striking things in the first phase of Red Thread was how little the women knew of each other. I had not realised that Guyana had grown quite that divided. The difference I'm drawing here between “them” and “me” is generational. I grew up in a Guyana which had not been physically divided by the violence of the early 1960s^{ix}. I don't mean that there was no racial conflict between Indians and Africans; I mean that we were not ignorant about each other—though we were very ignorant, most of us, about Indigenous peoples. I remember when Red Thread had our first Encounter, which was our notion of an annual general meeting, all the women came in dressed to the nines, the Afro-Guyanese women looking like they were going to a party. And I remember a stiffness on both sides. And later, when there were food shortages and some relationship had grown sufficient for women to be collaborating—“I could buy so and so in Linden if you buy so and so on the West Coast”—the women were shopping for each other in that kind of way, and they were beginning to hobnob with each other. I remember the total amazement of Indo-Guyanese women from the West Coast when they went up to Linden. They came back and said “They poor!” People had told them that Black people weren't

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poor, and Black people didn't behave as if they were poor... The Afro-Guyanese women had the same response when they went to the homes of Indo-Guyanese women. So they were always full of these discoveries about each other, of what seemed to me to be perfectly normal things. I remember another day that was totally mind-blowing to them was when Sistren brought a video in which the sugar workers were Afro-Jamaican.^x Oh, they were beside themselves. Never in their life had sugar workers been Afro, anywhere^{xi}.

So the discoveries via the time-use survey included things of which I would have said "everybody knows that", but everybody didn't know that. I remember when Cora went to the Pomeroon and saw Indigenous people who were in fact bonded labourers. She came back and said to Black people in town, "Do not ever let me hear you say again that you are the poorest people on the face of the earth. I just see the poorest people on the face of the earth. Just shut up yuh mout' in future." They didn't know that there were so many Amerindian people who had no running water. That they were walking to creeks for water, and so forth. And those who knew never told them. So as I've said, with the survey they saw both the absolute sameness of the housework and the ways in which the intensity of the housework varied because of race, geographic location, and so on. It was a real process of discovery for them, for the women who were the researchers. And, to me, it really changed them. One of them told me that in spite of the frustration they felt doing the survey, even at the time "it brought to life everything about our lives", adding, "Even when we used to have the discussions about counting unwaged work, it was never as real as with the time use." Since they counted everything, including emotional work, they were really—literally—counting "everything about our lives".

Clearly the RT women were looking both at their own lives and looking at and helping to document the work and lives of other women. Were those other women who were being researched expressing the same kind of enthusiasm, or curiosity, or awareness? I mean, was there any way to see what kind of impact the time-use survey had on the larger population that was interviewed?

As I remember it, they got different responses from different women. The survey involved 101 women. There were clearly women who were doing it only because we were asking them to do it. But there were others, as I remember from the reports at the time—with whom there were moments of recognition, there were moments of surprise, there were responses from the women in relation to their own lives, as if they were looking at these lives from inside/outside, for the first time. And what certainly happened across the years is that one of the women who'd administered the time use would tell us, "Let's ask so-and-so to do that", and we would ask, "Who is so-and-so?" And they would say "Time use". So that's where they know the woman from and had made sufficient contact with the woman, who was still there to be called on. I think some of those women went into Grassroots Women Across Race.

That's another organization?

We're now thinking for the first time of expanding Red Thread, but we weren't [doing that before] because the one absolute qualification for being in Red Thread from early on

was anti-racism. This is not in plentiful supply in Guyana. Not. There would be people who would say publicly they were Red Thread, and then we'd be climbing under a table because they would go somewhere and say, "Oh those *** coolie people" or "These *** blackman" or "These *** buck people..." I'm not saying that everyone else is a racist; I'm saying that not many people are anti-racist. So the first way that we dealt with that after the income-generating phase was over was by keeping Red Thread like it was, a very small but solid and reliable core, and having networks. The first network was Grassroots Women Across Race (GWAR)—across race means that you are willing to work across race. It doesn't mean that your head has reached where it should reach in relation to anti-racism, but that you're open to others. And then we expanded what we wanted—nobody ever discussed anybody's sexuality but I watched the whole of the Red Thread core become, in addition to being anti-racist, anti-homophobic and anti-violence. Those three. Of course, we also support the rights of people with disabilities (which is why our centre is wheelchair-accessible) but we're less active on that.

But now we're beginning—just beginning—to say in relation to Red Thread itself, you can be a member if you are either already anti-racist, anti-homophobic, and anti-violent, or really open to these principles, because it's too incestuous just to keep the core—you know, as if "we're the pure ones." I think we've come to this stage because we're all so much more confident in who we are. But GWAR was the first network we created, which at one stage...it had 60-something, 70-something women. Not all over the country—we've always been weak in Berbice^{xii}—but in parts of the interior, and other parts of Guyana.

And that in part also came out because of the survey?

Yes. So a lot of the other "research", which we in all honesty never thought of as research at all, in Phase 3, was directly connected to the time use...More than once we were planning an action, and it would seem sensible to say "Go do a diary. Let's see what that is." Sometimes it was "Go do a diary for a day", "Go do a diary for a half-day"—it tells you something that you want to know. It became a method that came to make sense to us, as a way of finding out what you couldn't find out any other way. So, directly connected to counting work and the valuing of work, would be, after the time-use survey, the flood research; we counted what the work of coping with the flood was for women. One reason we did it was the amount of racial tension we saw at a post-flood meeting of about 300 Afro- and Indo-women at the centre; the time use uncovered for us and for those women the amount and kind of work they were all doing, across race, for their families and communities to survive.

Another kind of "research" we did after the time-use survey was the price research around the introduction of VAT, showing the effect of VAT on our budgets. We did "case for" research to argue for increases for pensioners and women on public assistance, based on careful recording of their budgets... We could never get a whole large group to do it, right. But we didn't even care about that because by then —we're talking about two or three years ago—by then we knew what it was that we were seeing. We knew what it was we thought. We knew, and we wanted to bring it alive. And in a sense some of the "research" was not to find out anything at all, it was to demonstrate.

After collecting the diaries—the women do the diaries for these various purposes of documenting, making public statements, etc.—how is that information analysed? For the time-use survey, for example—did Solveig analyse it and then bring it back to the organization? And the organization was to carry it forward?

Yes, Solveig analysed it, always consulting us. It was a long back-and-forth process which started with all of us reading all the diaries and Solveig proposing a chart which we worked on and then entered the information into and sent back to her. It went back and forth. But we never really did anything with it outside of using it ourselves. It's down on our work plan every year to publish it, but it never felt like it was important outside of ... hm ... OK, yes, it's important. It's important from the point of view that it was grassroots women who surveyed the time use of other grassroots women, and did it for themselves and other women; it's also important for the findings. As far as we know, it's the first-time use of grassroots women by grassroots women. So it would be valuable to publish it

But publish how? When I look at the research we did in Phase 2 what I see are reports, and the reports could not have been intended for them [the women who did the research]. So for example, when I look at the bibliography for those reports I laugh out loud, because I don't know what many of the titles mean, so why would anybody else? I'm not saying there was an active hostility to publishing the time-use survey—it's just that we've used it over and over again in all kinds of ways. I wish I could find all the ways in which it's been used. But we're always alluding to it, we're always pulling from it.

It provides a knowledge base for RT?

Yes. I mean we and the women we work with are very happy when [we make things] like leaflets... We really did get into doing things like that, because they would be so accessible to the people whose lives you were talking about, and the other forms like reports were so inaccessible. I'm not saying there's no way of publishing findings in an accessible way but I don't know what it is. We don't know.

Do the women in RT, who conducted the time-use survey and these other projects around the floods and VAT, and so forth, consider themselves researchers?

They used to. And if they don't now, that would be my "fault". When I came back to Red Thread in about 1992 after I'd been ill the first time, I was pissed because they would describe themselves to me as community facilitators. And it very much expressed an us-and-them relationship with the community that I didn't think was a good relationship...

I don't know if I could put a word to what they are—but they certainly think of themselves now as, and are capable of, finding out whatever they want to find out, and of being able to increasingly record it in some form that can then be taken and made some use of, and so on. So it's a skill and competence they feel good about. They feel what we all feel when we master work, especially work which we're told is beyond us. That feeling had begun with the Phase 2 research and grew with the time-use survey.

Was there any particular kind of training that happened within the organization before doing any of the research?

As I mentioned earlier, in Phase 2 they'd been trained in participatory research methods, qualitative and quantitative research methods, but the main focus was qualitative research. Both before the survey and after, a lot of the work that had to do with counting the work and then counting other things about grassroots women's lives had been done with me...From counting time use we went to counting what money women got or didn't get for their work. Before Red Thread went to other women we would talk about what we wanted, we would talk about where we thought we might get it from, we would talk about how we thought we might get it. Often enough the women doing the research knew more than I did. And often there was a degree of trial and error. They would go and come back and say, well, that didn't work, and so on.

Whomever you are talking about—pensioners, domestic workers—in however small a number, we were always testing to see what is the way we would get it out of them, the “it” being what you had gone to retrieve, because you already knew it was there.

I remember in particular, when they were talking to other women about how they managed their budgets—that was a trip. They were talking to other women just like themselves, and if you are talking to women just like yourself you both know more and you know less. So, you know more because that's your life as well, but you know less because things don't seem surprising. I remember the biggest thing we had to go back and forth on was this: they thought it was completely normal to come back with findings that said that “So-and-so earned or was paid a total of G\$30,000 and spent G\$100,000.” They thought there was nothing weird about that because that's just how they lived themselves. So they would come back to me and I would say, “Where (the rest of money) come from?” and we'd play with that and they'd go back and they'd see something else, and so on. And in fact in the process we all learned a lot watching them look at themselves, look at all kinds of things, including that when that's the kind of budget you have what slips is food, that's what you spend less on.

So you had a very instrumental role in asking the questions and setting up the time-use survey?

I was a kind of conduit between the women here and Solveig—at the time, I was the person who knew both. So the to-and-fro is, they tell me the piece that they know, which is usually more than I know, and something then occurs to me that I put to them, and so on, so it's a conversation. A conversation which can take a long time, but which I never thought of for one moment as training, except insofar as you hope that you wouldn't have to do that all over again. They do very well for themselves now.

A question in my mind, as I'm listening to you is, how does an organization like RT build upon this experience? I'm seeing the information being collected by “grassroots” women, the analysis happening elsewhere and some of the probing coming from another group of people.

First, the three groups you identify: grassroots women, which you put in quotes but we don't; Solveig, the "elsewhere" where the analysis happened; and me, where "some of the probing [was] coming from ...". Of course we have different skills—but they're not a hierarchy of skills. I have the skill of probing but I couldn't have collected the information that Halima, Joycelyn, Nicola and Chandra did and I couldn't analyse the information as Solveig did in consultation with us. All of it was a collaboration. More generally, the only thing I can tell you is that on the research and analysis skills the need for external help becomes less and less. And that is really just literally true. When we've done the mini time-use and other surveys I mentioned, we analyse them ourselves. So that leads into my response to your question, "how does an organization like Red Thread build upon this experience [of doing the time-use survey]?" The time-use survey changed all of us. It opened the way to what came after. I could show this better if we were better at documenting what we do. That's one of the main things I would like us to do. And it can't be us in Red Thread doing it. We've obviously made a mess of it so far, because we are not a writing unit and we haven't used video systematically either. And we're very pressed for time to get things done.

You mean documenting the organization's work?

Yes, and within the organization's work, very crucially the research. Documenting what we do. Every time I write project proposals, although that's beginning to be done by others as well, every single time, as I'm writing about work we've done, I have to sit people down and say "and then what", "and then what"?, and so on.

That's why I am curious about the role that you have, in probing, and asking those questions, and perhaps guiding.

Sometimes I'm only probing for information about what we've all worked on. Sometimes I'm probing for ideas. I am older than all the others, and there is a different experience I have, including more formal education, and I do that—the probing and the sorting and the documenting—better than others in the core do, up to now, yes. That's true. But it's a constantly evolving relationship, and we all are very conscious of that. I don't mean that I am making it evolve. But the way other Red Thread members talk to me now is utterly different from how they spoke to me even two years ago, and what they know and what they're sure they know is different. It's different, and it's good. Not only in relation to research, but generally, I am what you call the prober, I would call it the pusher. As I said, that's in relation to the living income issues. For violence it's Karen, and there, too, the relationship is changing. The they/us is changing. We operate as a collective.

But organizations can sometimes be so determined by the persons within that organization that continuity is hard. People sometimes step out of an organization, and it moves into something completely different, or doesn't have the ability to carry forward what it had before. And, with your role being so central in such a process...?

All of us are central. And all of us are very conscious that we intend to survive. When I got sick last year another of the Red Thread members said that in view of the fact that they have two "sickly" co-ordinators (Karen was also ill), she thought it was time to step

up to the plate. And they would survive. If the “sickly co-ordinators” went under, they would survive. This is not a one- or two-woman organization.

...The region is full of what we thought were organizations that disappeared because one person left. Peggy Antrobus left WAND^{xiii} and there’s no WAND, and so on. That’s an oversimplification of what happened, but it’s not an oversimplification to say that Peggy’s retirement meant that most of what was good in the old WAND died. But Red Thread will make it, and I think some of the things we will do this year will underscore that. We will make it because of internal strengths but also because we are part of an international network that has made and continues to make a lot of difference to our organizing, as we do to the whole network’s.

Before we get into the future plans, I want to ask about lessons learned. Is there anything you think you may have done differently—any other way of collecting information, any other kind of method? The diary method is an important one, but is there anything you tried that didn’t work so well?

Well, there are some things I can’t answer because I literally just don’t know. One of the things I do know about is that we tried to do political report cards (that is, reports on what action political parties had taken, planned, or tried to take in relation to their manifesto promises), which were a failure...It was something that we wanted to do, it didn’t come up because we wanted to go somewhere for funds, we wanted to do it. But I think by the time we tailored it to suit what we could go to a funder with, we were in trouble.

...As the main person designing the project, I had made a fairly fundamental error to start with, which was not seeing that the (political) parties that would respond to us were the parties that felt weak enough to need friends—that the ruling People’s Progressive Party (PPP) certainly wouldn’t feel that, but that the main opposition People’s National Congress (PNC) would, but only in a half-ass way, and so on.^{xiv} There were ways of getting past that, there were things that we could do, if we were not busy trying to follow step 1, step 2, step3, and so on, as we’d designed it. Because one of the things about funders, most of them, is that if you tell them in advance that you are going to do 20 steps, then you have to do those 20 steps, regardless of what happens... Funders don’t have any room for trial and error, even when they’re funding a pilot. So the rigidities of their evaluation, monitoring and reporting requirements, and so forth, throw you out totally...

So that is one project that I think was a failure, beginning with the failure of judgement on our part to start with, but very much because the project was never doable in the way that a funder would want. And so in the end it became not doable at all.

Some of the things we did in Phase 3 as far as I remember were unfunded. And those were the best we did. I don’t remember reporting to anybody... except ourselves and other women we organize with. Except for a very few, funders constrain you.

I want to ask you about funding priorities or research priorities from funding organizations. How has RT responded to that?

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I come out of a long, left-wing tradition which says be wary of certain institutions—I'm afraid of certain institutions. I no longer belong to the same tradition but I'm very conscious of what's been called the "NGO-isation" of the region: a use of NGOs to carry forward the neo-liberal project. And I'm not always sure that, however good you think you are, you have the capacity to turn their help into your self-interest or the self-interest of the people that you're working with. So, those people frighten me. But it really has not been many [that have funded RT research]—it's been CAREC, the IOM^{xv}, and UNICEF.

Now with UNICEF—we didn't do the actual research, we facilitated it—it was to get children's experience of violence. And as I remember, that one made sense to me. This was a period not long after Karen did a vigil.^{xvi} She was absolutely hysterical over the state of children, deeply, deeply upset. There was a time when she came and stood up next to me and stared into space, and I said, "What is it this time?" And she said that a mother had just come [to RT] because she thought that her three-month-old child had thrush. And what it was, was dried semen in the child's mouth because some blasted man had worked out that a child's instincts to suck could work to his advantage. She was going berserk. So in a sense, her going on the road with a vigil in 2003, or doing the UNICEF research in 2004/2005 all became part of, "what can I, what can we do about this"? So, responding to a request from a UN agency then made sense for us. The point of the research, like the point of the vigil, was to find a way to force attention to the traumas that were being inflicted on children and demand that government and all of us address them.

Is there anything that RT is thinking about doing at the moment? Any new projects?

We've designed a project, which is the closest we've ever come to designing a project exactly as we would like to do it. Whether anyone will give us the money or not...the project is ours. Now, there's one big piece of research that we did not build into the project because we don't have the capacity to do it—and didn't want to get diverted by it—a profile of domestic workers in Guyana. A group that we're really interested in organizing with is domestic workers. We're on the steering committee of the Caribbean Domestic Workers' Network (CDWN) and through the ILO, they're going to do a profile of domestic workers in Guyana and Antigua.^{xvii} The idea started because I said at a CDWN meeting that I did not recognize the domestic workers of Guyana in anything that we were saying, and that we had to acknowledge that domestic work is not the same thing all over the region: it depends on your economy, it depends on all kinds of things. There's also going to be a difference between domestic workers in what they call sending and receiving countries for migrant domestic workers, and Guyana is one of the sending countries. Another possible difference is that we can find very few domestic workers who only do domestic work. They are sex workers, they are vendors, they are all kinds of workers—they run outside their house and sell two sweeties, come inside and sell beauty services, and so on. They have to do all this for their children to be able to eat and go to school.

We think that is a good thing to know, not for the sake of knowing, but for the sake of understanding what it is we're doing, because there are things people want us to do that

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sound wrong. But we have to prove them wrong. For example, under the CARICOM Single Market and Economy Free Movement of Persons, to exercise their right to travel around the region for domestic work, women will have to do a Caribbean regional vocational qualification. And we think that this is about policing domestic workers, and not anything to do with facilitating their movement in the region to do domestic work. But we have to show that. Because the women are doing quite a fine job at the moment traveling up and down this region without anybody's permission, and now they want them to show a piece of paper which many will find it difficult or impossible to get. Few domestic workers here can do the kind of course we hear people talking about—they would have to pay for it, take time off work, maybe have pre-qualifications they don't have and show no signs of needing—we need to show that.

Anyhow, that's not built into the proposal but what would be built in would be—and again, we don't think about this as research in the first place—a drop-in centre for domestic workers, because women who are domestic workers don't know if they have any labour rights. All these women are just “unorganized” and the unions don't care about them. So obviously in the process of giving them advice, you yourself are making records out of which you discover things, in the same way as we did and do out of the violence drop-in centre.

The method that we're trying to use with the violence drop-in centre is that you provide a service, that as far as possible you train women so that the service becomes, at least partially, self-help, so people understand the law, and so on. One woman told us one day that she went to court and “The lawyer din come and I just come there and talk for myself because I did know what I was talking”. So you do the self-help. But you also are trying in the process to identify, along with the women, changes that we all want and need in policy and law...So that drop-in centre is on violence, and we're going to do a drop-in centre principally for domestic workers. But since there is, as we say, no such thing as a pure domestic worker, it's really for everybody.

It is preferably documentation, as distinct from what you store in your head—documentation from the service—that becomes the source of your advocacy and campaigning...In terms of dissemination, we're going to do a TV talk show and stop the vain attempt to write. We are going to do a TV talk show, and the talk show in part should be fed by that documentation.

We haven't yet talked about the race research, which I don't know if we'll be able to finish, but we could not have done that without Alissa.^{xviii} This is how that research came about. In 2001, when post-electoral violence escalated following a jailbreak of five men who went on a rampage [and] whose motives were at once political, racial and criminal—Alissa wanted to research that with Red Thread.^{xix} And we could not get people to talk. We found one person who would talk, and then he died in an accident—one person who was prepared to tell us something that was not widely known, what those men were doing to women in Buxton,^{xx} which is rape with guns...And, of course, Black people around us were getting nervous because you know “We always put our dirty linen outside.” But we say “Whether your linen is dirty or not, you have to put it out”—and what we have to try

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to ensure is that all dirty linen comes out. We have to stop hiding these truths which fester and fester.

The one thing that kept on coming up during discussions about 2001 was something I think we all know, but it was nonetheless startling. It was how alive 1964, which was the height of the violence of the 1960s, is in everybody's consciousness, even if they weren't alive at the time. They might not know the exact year, but they would tell you something about it. And so, eventually, we decided to research 1964, and essentially she (Alissa) is doing the interviews with Joycelyn [Bacchus]. We're in a total dilemma over how to use it, and are in a conversation with a friend about whether there's a way that film can do it. So we haven't dropped it, it's been going on for ages, but I mention it because it's a good example of something where you do need the other skills that you don't have, and it would be stupid to pretend you have them or to try to build them. We don't have them here and we can't have all skills ourselves. But the aspects of interviewing skills that can be passed on, Alissa is passing on to Joycelyn, while at the same time relying on Joycelyn's greater knowledge of Linden, which is where some of the worst violence was in 1964.

To wrap up, RT doesn't really do research as something distinct, although it's an integral part of what it does. Is there a name for what you do?

No. You know when CAFRA^{xxi} started—the very name was research and action—the notion was, you do research and then you do action. That one-step, two-step kind of notion. No. I don't know any kind of name for all we've done, because it is such a gamut. One of the reasons I did the phase explanation is because what we did with sex work or with domestic violence is not similar to what we do now. What we do now are all various forms of organizing at the grassroots, using all the various methods of other sectors. What we do now is far more under our control, in terms of deciding to do it, designing it, and using methods that are manageable by more and more of us. And now the search is for methods for publicizing that are also manageable by us. If that has a name other than organizing, I don't know what it is...It's really that there is a politics which drives your campaigning, and your campaigning includes your research.

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Notes

ⁱ There are several publications by and about Red Thread. One of the more comprehensive was written by Andaiye and published as “Red Thread: the Red Thread story.” in Brown, Suzanne Francis, ed. *Spitting in the Wind: Lessons in Empowerment from the Caribbean* (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 2000).

ⁱⁱ The Working People’s Alliance (WPA) was a political party—which always functioned more like a movement—launched in 1979 in opposition to an authoritarian regime. It was pro-working class and, in a country with deep racial divisions, especially between Guyanese of Indian and African descent, it was multi-racial. It had a collective leadership, but its popular leader was Walter Rodney until his assassination on June 13, 1980.

ⁱⁱⁱ The other three were Diana Matthews who migrated soon after Red Thread started, Karen de Souza and Andaiye

^{iv} Linda Peake teaches at York University. The studies referred to here were published as Red Thread Women’s Development Programme, “Givin’ Lil’ Bit Fuh Lil Bit’: Women and Sex Work in Guyana,” in Kempadoo, Kamala, ed., *Sun, Sex and Gold: Tourism and Sex Work in the Caribbean* (Boulder: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999) and Red Thread’s *Study on Reproductive and Sexual Health and Domestic Violence: Issues of Women in Guyana*, Guyana, 2000.

^v Cora was a founding member of Red Thread in 1986 and remained an active member and a point of reference in Red Thread until her death in 2012 at the age of 62.

^{vi} This is Selma James’ explanation of what Marx tried to find out with his 100 Questions.

^{vii} In 1982, the English Collective of Prostitutes (ECP), an autonomous group in the Wages for Housework Campaign, carried out a 12-day occupation of a church in London to demand support for prostitutes in their conflict with the police. The ECP was backed by Women against Rape and Black Women for Wages for Housework, two other groups in the Campaign. In London, as International Secretary of the WPA, Andaiye actively worked in support of the occupation.

^{viii} Before and during Beijing, where Andaiye was a Guyana delegate and a CARICOM-employed adviser to the CARICOM Ministers responsible for Women’s Affairs attending the Conference, she worked to get support for the Campaign’s lobby to win agreement on the inclusion of counting unwaged work in the Beijing Platform for Action.

^{ix} The early 1960s witnessed some of the worst racial violence in Guyana’s history. By the end of it, Guyanese of Indian and African descent had fled and been chased out of their communities and came to live in communities that were racially homogeneous.

^x Sistren Theatre Collective, formed in 1977, is a Jamaican women’s organization. The video, *Sweet Sugar Rage* (1985), documents conditions of female sugar workers, including their experiences of sexism in the trade union.

^{xi} In Guyana, after Indian indentured labourers replaced enslaved Africans on the sugar plantations following Emancipation, field workers in sugar have been so overwhelmingly Indo-Guyanese that Guyanese people think of cane cutting as an “Indian” occupation everywhere.

^{xii} Red Thread has done a fair amount of work on the West Coast of Berbice, so this is in reference to the Corentyne, which is the section of Berbice to the east of the Berbice river, stretching all the way to Guyana’s border with Suriname. Both the sex work research and the trafficking in persons research was done on the Corentyne, but the main impediment to doing more work there was the same as for other parts of the country—not enough money.

^{xiii} The Women and Development Unit of the School of Continuing Studies at the University of the West Indies, Cave Hill campus, Barbados.

^{xiv} The People’s Progressive Party (PPP) is, since 1992, the ruling party. The People’s National Congress (PNC) is the main opposition party.

^{xv} IOM is the International Organization for Migration.

^{xvi} In 2003, Karen de Souza led a Red Thread 24-hour vigil from April 17 to April 30 for a schoolboy, Joshua Bell, who was kidnapped and murdered.

^{xvii} Since the interview was done, the Government of Antigua and Barbuda decided to do a profile of domestic workers there, so the ILO research is on Guyana alone.

^{xviii} Alissa Trotz, who teaches at the University of Toronto, is an overseas member of Red Thread.

^{xix} It became known as the Mash Day jailbreak, given that the escape occurred around the time of the annual Mashramani celebrations in Guyana, a national holiday.

^{xx} The residents of Buxton, like the five men, are Afro-Guyanese. Most of the victims in the post-election violence in 1997 and 2001, as well as during the 2002 rampage were Indo-Guyanese. In what was said to be retaliation, a group that came to be called the Phantom Squad, allegedly financed by businessmen (including those with connections to the transnational drug trafficking trade) and supported from within the highest echelons of government, targeted and executed large numbers (estimated to be in the hundreds) of predominantly Afro-Guyanese men.

^{xxi} Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action



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