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FRAGILITY AND PERSISTENCE OF DOMINANT MASCULINITIES



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Fragility and Persistence of Dominant Masculinities

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Vulnerability, Persistence and Destabilization of Dominant Masculinities: An Introduction

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The study of Caribbean men is by no means new. However, the emergence of men and masculinities studies in the Caribbean, or what Rhoda Reddock refers (2004) to as the study of men as “gendered beings,” can be located within a larger body of gender and sexuality studies research produced within the last three decades. This *Caribbean Review of Gender Studies* special issue on Vulnerability, Persistence and Destabilization of Dominant Masculinities represents a series of critical conversations intended to track a range of concerns related to gender, sexuality, men and masculinities in the Caribbean. This issue has been in the making for a very long-time and indeed persistence pays off. The study of Caribbean men and masculinities is an interdisciplinary research field focusing on non-western masculinities studies. The current special issue reflects the diverse sub-themes that have characterised men and masculinities research in the Caribbean to date.

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Women, children, sexual 'minorities', nations and a host of other constructed gender non-conforming identities experience masculinity and hegemonic masculinity (in particular) as oppressive. But increasingly, hegemonic¹ masculinity itself remains an unstable category in some circles. We also recognise that often when the concept 'hegemonic masculinity' is invoked there is an assumption of consensus in its application. Hearn (2012, 593-594) reflects on the 'conceptual slipperiness' in the deployment of the concept as a result of an unresolved means through which Gramsci's hegemony is taken up, (re)framed as 'hegemonic masculinity', and redeployed "with quite different meanings, within different political, disciplinary and epistemological traditions."² We use hegemonic masculinity to signify a set of idealised, institutionalised, socio-economic, socio-cultural and political forms of manhood, and while these forms might be unattainable to most men, men are certainly encouraged into achieving them. Notably, for some men and women, hegemonic masculinity conforms to the central role of compulsory heteropatriarchal men in society. It confirms all of the 'normative' behaviours that are assigned by ritual, custom or convention for men, so that many feel a certain collective affirmation of this masculine identity (Connell 2000). Hegemonic masculinity, and its broader epistemological field of compulsory heteropatriarchy, reflects a remarkable resiliency, despite persistent interrogation and contestation. The vulnerability of hegemonic masculinity is embedded in its dependence on the affirmation of others, men's self-imposed alienation from femininity, neuroses about feminist assertion, the feminine, effemiphobia, the gender-panic, with the penis as the ultimate representation of phallic power, domination and a weaponized form of social control. These attributions highlight the profound limits of hegemonic masculinity as an ideal form of heterosexuality for all men (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005), by developing anti-homosexual practices, tendencies and ideologies.

Our understanding of masculinity is that it is amenable to floats and shifts contingent upon different social categories such as African-Caribbean, Indo-

Caribbean, mixed-race, skin color, class, gender nonconforming and sexual orientation. Few men within these social categories demonstrate all aspects of this ideal “hegemonic masculinity”, hence the title of our special edition is *Vulnerability, Persistence and Destabilization of Dominant Caribbean Masculinities*. We understand masculine identities as constantly changing within and responding to different cultural and political contexts and constructs, but we also recognise a persistence tendency to align masculinity to power and privilege. These tensions in the ideological and material bases in men's articulations of self are explored as part of this special issue.

Early Caribbean gender and masculinity scholars (Miller 1986; Chevannes and Brown 1998; Clark 1957; Perry 1996; Reddock 2004; Mohammed 1994, and Lewis 1998, 2000) have all examined masculinity and manhood in relation to gender and family relations as a starting point for making intelligible men and masculinities in the Caribbean. Heteropatriarchal hegemony forces some men to pride themselves on hard work, to conceptualize a distorted authenticity to their being and to cling to traditional cultural roles as main providers to their families and friends within male peer support circles. It also trains men to accept financial payment for work — over feelings or personal satisfaction — it also encourages subterfuge among men as they seek to present socially acceptable selves.

The problematic at this particular juncture framed the following question: how are men coping in the context of a prevailing neoliberal economic agenda, in which, unemployment is chronic, the creation of a global ‘precariat’ class is growing (Standing 2011) and in which there is little hope of appeasement in sight? The precariat class and precarious working conditions are displacing the salariat³ or salaryman, whose pain is revealed by an alarming rise in suicides and social illnesses as noted in research done by Standing (2011) in the UK. Work, as a master's status as we know sociologically, constitutes the core of identity in the climate of neoliberalism. To be unemployed for extended periods is quite destabilizing for both men and women. The Caribbean is a region where large

groups of women have been a part of the paid labour force for a very long time so unemployment cuts at the core of how women position themselves and are positioned relative to others (children, family, friends, inter alia). Men's ideological investment in the provider role may in part explain how unemployment functions as a form of emasculation, but it is also disconcerting to some women who also have certain expectations of the roles that their men, boyfriends, sons, and partners are required to perform in society and in the household. Precarious work and the poor-paprization of women in general intensifies the vulnerability and destabilization of Caribbean men's masculinities, while ensuring heteropatriarchal capitalist exploitation of women and children. Long ago, Andrea Cornwall and Nancy Lindisfarne (1994) asked a most pertinent question about this phenomenon that has become even more widespread in the contemporary Caribbean: what do men do when they can no longer bring home the bread or the bacon? And for many parents in the Caribbean, their worries are how will their boys become men if they cannot find work. Evidently, they do not stop being men. They must find ways of regrouping and moving forward, shifting their sense of themselves in ways that make sense. It is not only those men without jobs who are made vulnerable, but those with jobs are increasingly faced with new machinations of insecurity about the jobs they so tenuously hold. Women and men must face an uncertain future in which several social protections are being eroded, medical benefits are being cut back, promised social security benefits are being paid in piecemeal fashion, with the creation of the precariat class. There is the relentless threat that at any time the offshore companies can close their doors, or Caribbean governments can be instructed by "market forces" to further trim government fat, or how to establish new ways of negotiating the many regimes of control placed on them in the factory or office by management. These vulnerabilities are material, social and psychological. Not only do they present material burdens on families, but they also weigh heavily on men's sense of self, self-confidence; and furthermore they demonstrate precisely the point that Andrea Cornwall and Nancy Lindisfarne made and referred to earlier in this article about the dislocation and destabilization of masculinity. [Unemployment therefore requires that we make

adjustments, that we adjust expectations and we continue to be the best we can be in the circumstances, until we can do better. Masculinity cannot be reduced to a singularity of purpose. We are too resourceful to limit our options in this way].

Vulnerability, Persistence and Destabilization of Dominant Caribbean Masculinities, is also a challenge to economic-masculinity and various forms of Caribbean masculinities that emphasize sexual and violent overtones as dangerous and exciting. On decolonization, Fanon reminds us "at whatever level we study it... decolonization is quite simply the replacing of a certain 'species' of men by another 'species' of men" (1961: 35). The nature of decolonization and masculinity is the gendering of consciousness or the reciprocal influence the colonized and the colonizer exercise on each other in the formation of their respective gendered masculine identities. Our volume also echoes Spivak's influential article "Can the Subaltern Speak?" We do not want to exclude the voices and representation of Caribbean men by Caribbean men, a recurring phenomenon within Western discourse on masculinity studies (1988). We fully appreciate that the focus on women and gender, introduced by women in the Caribbean, was instrumental in pushing men to think of themselves as gendered and gendering subjects. Since we believe that masculinity and femininity are socially constructed mutually defining phenomena, we are proud of the space provided by the *Institutes for Gender and Development Studies* on all three campuses of The University of the West Indies, for men and women to be engaged in discourses on gender and sexually diverse populations (LGBTQ and questioning). We find much of the writings of women on Caribbean masculinity to be very insightful and perceptive. Hence articulations and narratives of representation are central to this volume on *Vulnerability, Persistence and Destabilization of Dominant Caribbean Masculinities*. Caribbean hypermasculinities, in this context, offer us interesting insights on how we might navigate, negotiate and understand gender non-conforming performances of Caribbean culture where it is assumed to be one of heterohypermasculinity. We believe that the recent publication by Donna

Hope is a particularly useful start to the question of gender non-conforming. In her article, Hope analyzes an emerging space of gender non-conformity in which traditional forms of masculinity combine with emerging patterns of the same to blur the lines of performance of hypermasculinity, hyper-questioning and homoerotic male peer support bonding. A dancehall bonding, where masculinity is embedded in visual glitter, bright clothing, a camp quasi-feminine hairstyling and sexuality, is less binary and falls within a more fluid understanding of the lived experience of some men (Hope 2013). Dialectically therefore, we are hopeful that in general, vulnerability and destabilization would not only be read as disruptive but would also be viewed in light of the spaces these tendencies can open up for a broader, more nuanced understanding of men and masculinity in the Caribbean. Majors and Billson (1992) reminds us that the problem with the term hypermasculine is that it oversimplifies the impact of race, class and, in the Caribbean situation, colonial oppression. Collins (2006: 93) calls upon Black and racial minority men to work on developing definitions of masculinities that would enable them to see their self-worth more than a paycheck. The clarion call here is for men not only to see themselves as economic providers when employed, but also through unpaid wages to see that they can be providers of emotions, support, feelings and empathy while simultaneously keeping the family stable through other forms of provisions. In essence, we want to argue that Caribbean masculinities have been gender bending and have been gender non-conforming for centuries, where masculinities represents not a fixed type of manhood or man, rather men position themselves through different structural, political, economic and cultural dynamics. Mangan, quoted in Beynon (2002:90) reminds us that masculine gender identity is never stable; its terms are continually being re-defined and re-negotiated, the gender performance continually being re-staged. Certain themes and tropes inevitably re-appear with regularity, but each era experiences itself in remarkably different ways.

The broad coverage of the critical essays and gender dialogues reflects CRGS' commitment to producing interdisciplinary research in the field of feminist

and gender studies. These conversations foreground critical aspects of the lives of men, women and children in the Caribbean, with a focus on articulations of masculinity. The gender dialogues offer a series of provocations and reflections on critical issues as they face men. For instance, Alissa Trotz' reflection is an attempt to understand the unfortunate circumstances surrounding a young man in Guyana, who was arrested, beaten and viciously sodomized while in police custody. Trotz explores the social, political, racial and gender implications of this incident. Her contribution can be read alongside AbioyeMunashe's poetry. Read together, we observe that the physical, sexual and symbolic violence enacted by the state through a series of actors must be understood as occurring at the intersections of race, class, gender and coloniality in the lives of men.

These intersections are further explored in the essay by Wesley Crichlow, as he critically evaluates the experiences of young Black men in Toronto who are both victims of state perpetrated violence and participate in various forms of interpersonal violence. Arguing that young Black men have their masculinity "weaponized" and "prisonized" by the state, Crichlow shows how specific racialised, sexualized and colonized groups are made even more vulnerable as a consequence of a state sponsored initiative to eradicate criminality. The essay not only contributes to the conceptual understanding of the cycles of violence to which young Black men in Toronto are exposed, but it points to the responsibility of the state in creating more beneficial outcomes for its citizens.

Likewise, the relationship between men, masculinities and violence is also explored in the essay "Pullin rank" by Hakim Mohandas Amani Williams. Williams is particularly concerned about how masculinities intersect with school violence and the structural context within which this occurs. He uses a series of semi-structured interviews, focus groups, observations and classroom discussions conducted over a seven month period at a secondary school in Trinidad and Tobago as his main sources of data, and these were followed up three years later by a three-week observation. As part of the cultural vocabulary of the

country, he deploys 'pullin rank' as a localised concept to signify "the hyper-exertion of authority and power." It becomes an explanatory framework for how specific manifestations of hegemonic masculinity feature in the school setting, but it is also anchored within specific socio-structural dynamics. He proposes that both structural and direct violence is evident in a spectrum of 'masculinist posturing', which exists as part of a neocolonial hegemonic masculinity. Anchored within the hegemonic masculinity framework, the essay expands the conceptual vocabulary of this subtheme within men and masculinity studies.

One of the most overt and damaging responses to gender transgressions away from a heteronormative sexualised scripting of masculinity is through the perpetration of violence, which is also the subject of the essay by Carl E. James and Andrea A. Davis on "Jamaican males" readings of masculinities and the relationship to violence." James and Davis analyse the intersections of gender, sexuality and violence in accounts drawn from focus group interviews provided by diverse groupings of Jamaican young men residing in urban and rural communities. They found young men in their sample were united in their criticism of homosexuality as 'inappropriate behaviour'. There was a general fear of violence among rural and urban young with rural men eschewing the image of the 'bad man'. Rural men were also found to express "a greater sense of pessimism about their life chances," while urban men imagined themselves as mentors, agents of change and cited education as a means through which to achieve success. The essay by James and Davis points to critical areas for intervening in the lives of young men, on the one hand, to challenge the homophobia inherent in the construction of masculine identity and, on the other hand, to address the experiences of social dislocation among Jamaican youth.

Popular culture and the politics of representation are featured in the essay by Linden Lewis. Lewis analyses the construction of masculinity in Calypso through its lyrics. A central concern in this paper is the relationship between the artist and the people in the creation of what it means to be a man in the Caribbean. Using calypsos of the 1960s (particularly those by Lord Kitchener and

the Mighty Sparrow) Lewis' analysis exposes the dominant narratives within this art form about what "constitutes manliness," the negative outcomes of these hegemonic renderings of masculinity for both women and men, the construction of men's sexualised selves, and the effects of the male gaze on Caribbean men's relations with and views on women.

Similarly, in Kimalee Phillip's essay, Carnival and the performance of mas become critical sites for the subversion of respectability politics, the enactment of gender transgressions, the expression of Afro-Caribbean spirituality and traditions, and the contestation of normative sexualised representations. Through an analysis of Carnival as a dominant socio-cultural event within Caribbean societies Phillip asks us to rethink, reimagine and redefine both the gender normative and heteronormative scripting of identity relations that so popularly circulate as commonsense.

In keeping with the interrogation of popular cultural forms in the Caribbean, 'Moving dancehall off island' by Karen Flynn traces the role of popular culture in providing a space for the expression of black identity in a diaporic context. Here again, popular culture (in the form of music) functions as an important site for the contestation of identity relations. In this instance, race animates the discussion of gender and sexuality in dancehall among black Canadian youth. In much the same way as Carolyn Cooper (1994 and 2004) has done in her work on dancehall in Jamaica, Flynn challenges a narrative on dancehall as inherently misogynous and patriarchal, and makes a case for its 'redemptive' and possibly 'empowering' effect on black youth in Toronto. Dancehall, according to Flynn, provides a space in which women can function as autonomous sexual beings through their articulation of their sexual desires.

In conclusion, the emerging challenges for masculinities studies in the Caribbean are similar to those that have emerged in North American gender, feminist, queer, trans and masculinity studies. Omi and Winant's (1994) theorization of 'racial projects' is simultaneously an interpretation,

representation, recognition or explanation of racial dynamics, and an effort to reorganize and redistribute resources along particular racial lines. Racial projects connect what race means in a particular discursive practice and the ways in which both social structures and everyday experiences are racially organized, based upon that meaning (1994: 56). Caribbean masculinities, like racial projects, are in a process of *Persistence Destabilization*, ever-evolving with every generation linking it to culture and political economy. A different ideological critique in our work on Caribbean masculinity studies is warranted in order to understand the challenging complexities of gender-based violence, violence against transgendered bodies, homosocial bonding, male peer support, poverty and social disfranchisement in which men experience and understand masculinities. (Nurse 2003, 2004) Part of this critique must also center on the creation of a Caribbean prison nation wherein men are socialized by state structural violence (poverty and the prison) to understand violence as a form of achievement. Sociologists Majors and Billison refer to this violence as resource used by men to attain instrumentally their desired goals and status especially when other routes to achievement remain blocked (1992). A critique and understanding of the social and systemic structures that block disenfranchised and working-class men's ability to reject and unlearn violence is deeply needed. In addition, as we continue to explore the conceptual vocabulary of men and masculinities studies more work will be needed to (re)think how we engage available explanatory frameworks and concepts for understanding the experiences of Caribbean men. We offer this special issue on *Vulnerability, Persistence and Destabilization of Dominant Masculinities* as part of the ongoing critical work of unpacking and reframing knowledge (across a range of themes) about men and masculinities in the Caribbean.

¹ The term hegemony was first introduced by Lenin (1917) and others, in connection with the class alliance in which the proletariat led the peasantry in Russia, and popularized by Antonio Gramsci in Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci, edited and translated by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (Lawrence and Wishart, and International Publishers; London, and New York: 1971).

² It is worth recognising that there is some concern about the slippage which occurs when Raewyn Connell and other scholars redeploy Gramsci's notion of hegemony as cultural ascendancy/legitimation (rather than out-and-out brute force). There is a relative lack of application of the concept of hegemonic masculinity in the study of violence by men to known women, in spite of its wide application as an explanatory concept in men and masculinity studies more generally (Hearn 2012). In fact Hearn (2012: 593) demonstrates that it "has *not* become a key conceptual element in most feminist/profeminists theoretical and practical work on men's violence against women."

³ The salariat is concentrated in large corporations, government agencies and public administration, including the civil service (Standing, 2011:8)

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Gender and Performativity: Calypso and the Culture of Masculinity

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Abstract

The calypso is one of the greatest cultural contributions of the Caribbean. Originating in Trinidad and Tobago, it has grown over the last century to be part of the cultural experience of most of the Anglophone countries, and even some of the Spanish-speaking parts of the Caribbean littoral. This article explores the many ways in which the calypso reveals much about the construction of masculinity through its lyrics. It examines how this aspect of Caribbean popular culture conceives of what constitutes manliness, the burdens this imposes on men, the way men define their sexuality and address issues of desire, and the way the male gaze informs how men view and relate to women. The paper also uses as its point of departure, the calypsos of the 1960s, with particular reference to the songs of The Mighty Sparrow and The Lord Kitchener, two of the greatest exponents of the art form. This essay therefore represents one way of looking at the reciprocal relationship between the artist and the people in the construction of masculinity.

Keywords: Calypso, Caribbean, masculinity, performativity, femininity, heterosexism

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The calypso is one of the Caribbean's best-known art forms. Originating in Trinidad somewhere between the end of the eighteenth century and the turn of the nineteenth century, it is seen by most Caribbean people as an undeniably important part of their culture. Though the subject of competing nationalist claims, this art form's hybrid origins in the polyrhythms of West African highlife music and African practices such as the tradition of the griot are widely recognized. This hybridity likewise pervades contemporary calypso, which incorporates American soul music into Soca, fuses Jamaican reggae into Ragga Soca and turns Indian Punjabi music into Chutney music.

Gordon Rohlehr, the leading authority on the calypso, says its history is one of "urbanisation, immigration and Black reconstruction in post-Emancipation Trinidad" (1990, 1). Indeed, calypso's history has become very familiar to students of this musical genre as a result of the work of Gordon Rohlehr that spans over a quarter of a century; J. D. Elder (1966, 1995, 1973); Errol Hill (1967, 1971, 1972); and Keith Warner (1985, 1992), *inter alia*.

The calypso has had a curious history of marginalization and censorship. It was originally considered lewd, crude and vulgar; it was regarded as not culturally "proper", and "respectable" people would scarcely be expected to sing it. Part of the reason for the calypso's unpopularity was its working-class origins, and its association with the Carnival, which in turn was associated with the steel band — both of which were viewed by polite society as the site of tension, conflicts, gang fights and general lawlessness. Indeed, the calypso began among the social outcasts called the "Jamette". "Jamette" is a French patois word used to refer to people of low social standing. In addition, calypsonians sang about boasting, violence and sexuality, and therefore incurred the moral opprobrium of the bourgeois and religiously respectable. The calypso, then, is a product of society, and given its working class origin it reflects the structural constraints, frustrations, challenges, and unequal power of this stratum of society. Sentiments may be expressed via an individual calypso singer, but that singer conveys or speaks on behalf of the collective experiences

of his/her class. What appears on the surface to be the calypsonian's individuation may have more to do with the material context within which he or she operates, from which he or she draws his or her raw material, and which ultimately contains a message(s) that resonates with an audience at some significant level.

Over the years, however, the calypso has gradually shed the deadweight of this inauspicious beginning, appealing to a much wider audience among all social strata in the region, and attracting all classes of individuals not merely as consumers of the cultural product but as artists and performers themselves. This paper explores the ways in which calypsonians construct notions of masculinity in the lyrics of their calypsos. It investigates how one aspect of Caribbean popular culture conceives of what constitutes manliness, the burdens this imposes on men, the way men define their sexuality and address issues of desire, and the way the male gaze informs how men view and relate to women. These issues are critical, particularly because they are fundamentally rooted in the culture of the region and have become an important part of the popular consciousness.

This work essentially examines calypsos of the period of the 1960s with few exceptions. There are so many calypsos produced by so many calypsonians in one year that it would be unrealistic to try to cover all of them. Indeed, this paper is concerned only with the theme of masculinity in the calypso. In any given year, calypsos and calypsonians cover such topics as race, nationalism, politics, social events, culture, crime, and so on. This paper will focus, with some exceptions, on the work of The Mighty Sparrow (Slinger Francisco) and Lord Kitchener (Alwyn Roberts); Sparrow and Kitchener are sobriquets adopted by these two calypsonians. Almost all calypsonians have sobriquets. The sobriquet is part of the persona of the calypsonian. It is part of assuming an identity other than one's own, in order to comment on the politically explosive, the socially delicate and morally questionable subjects of the texts of calypso. At times then, the calypso provides the artist a liminal space, where the persona he or she

inhabits allows the calypsonian to separate him or herself from the message being delivered, and therefore the calypsonian operates with a certain impunity, rather than being hamstrung by the judgments and criticism of others in society.

Sparrow and Kitchener are among the most outstanding exponents of this art form and a history of the calypso could not be written without mention of the contribution of these two men. They, along with others, have been responsible for taking the calypso to a higher level, for improving its creative capacity, for helping to bring respectability to the art, and for internationalizing the music. Both artists have been in the business for decades and have been prodigious in their output of calypsos on a variety and range of topics. Lord Kitchener died in 2000, three months shy of his 78th birthday. Sparrow, despite some health problems in recent years, continues to perform throughout the Caribbean and in North America at the age of 79. These two men are largely responsible for setting the standards in calypso that many follow. They are the consummate artists and performers, since performance¹ is a crucial factor in the calypso. Indeed, performance is the site of the intersection of masculinity and the culture of calypso.

Performativity

The issue of the relationship between gender and performance is one that has been eloquently articulated by Judith Butler (1990). Butler argues that the analysis of gender has to extend beyond constructivist explanations to embrace a notion of performativity. She maintains that we make sense of gender as it manifests itself in learned behavior. Gender is, therefore, not merely about who we are as men, women, some combination of these two hegemonic categories, or some alternative category; it is equally about what we do. It is about how gender is acted out or performed. These manifestations or ways of acting out or performing gender provide us with important insights as to the

ways our behavior is overdetermined by norms of acceptability and notions of appropriateness. Though Butler's point is well taken here, one can argue of course that not all of gender is performance. Gender is also evident in writing, intonation of speech, aspirations, expectations, and realization of goals, all of which are in fact influenced by institutional differentiation by gender, power and culture.

Butler, however, subsequently revisited this concept of gender as performance, adding an important caveat about reductionism:

It would not be enough to say that gender is only performed or that the meaning of gender can be derived from its performance, whether or not one rethinks performance as a compulsory social ritual. For there are clearly workings of gender that do not "show" in what is performed as gender, and the reduction of the psychic workings of gender to the literal performance of gender would be a mistake.

... what is exteriorized or performed can be understood only through reference to what is barred from the performance, what cannot or will not be performed (1995, 31-32).

Butler's caution here is quite useful, for what is being argued is not that one could accurately describe the Caribbean male by examining the lyrics of the calypso. It is, rather, that given the popularity of the calypso, and the consistency of the messages about gender contained therein, one can gain some sociological insight into the ways masculinity is constructed and negotiated in the context of popular culture. It stands to reason, therefore, that other dimensions of masculinity, for example, certain dimensions of power, political participation and spatiality of gender, cannot necessarily be read off from the textual analysis of the calypso. The concept of gender as performance, however, offers important analytical insights not only in terms of

understanding some aspects of masculinity but also with regard to the presentation of the calypso.

If we concede that a lot of what constitutes masculinity is preoccupied with socio-sexual notions of performance, then it helps to explain the domination of men in the public sphere of the calypso. This is not to suggest that there are no women who sing calypso. From the early days of the chantuelle or lead singer there have been female calypsonians such as Sugar Alice, Lady Trinidad, Cariso Jane, and Lady Irie. Of the contemporary female calypsonians, Calypso Rose, Singing Francine, Denyse Plummer, Destra Garcia, Denise Belfon, Singing Sandra, Fay-Ann Lyons, and Ella Andall are among the best-known. The overall picture that emerges, however, is one in which men define the cultural landscape of this art form. There is a need for further research into the ways in which female calypsonians deal with the issues of gender and sexuality, as well as the way they articulate their own constructions of femininity and masculinity. Moreover, the performative space of the calypso has to be regarded as a site that men largely seize as a general arena of power to define the parameters of their own sexuality but quite interestingly, the sexuality of women as well, as is evident in the texts of the calypsos that follow. The point here is that calypsonians, through their lyrics and performance, construct scenarios about their own sexuality and sexual prowess, while mythologizing and fantasizing about women's presumed desires for them. This is not to deny any agency of women with regard to determining their own sexuality; rather it is to underline the fact that the performative dimension of the calypso is not a gender neutral space. It is a space that is infused by specific understandings of power.

It should be noted also that the sexual bravado is largely African-Trinidadian and African-Caribbean. Men of African descent dominate the calypso in the Caribbean. Though from time to time men of Indian descent also sing calypso, the genre of music known as chutney has become the preferred performative option for Indian men. A different type of boasting is emerging in this arena, though still laced with sexuality, in that male chutney singers tend to

brag of their capacity to consume alcohol in such songs as 'Rum Till I Die' [Adesh Samaroo], 'Rum is Meh Lover' [Ravi B], 'More rum for Me (Mr. Chankar)' [Neeshan Prabhoo], and 'Bar Man' [Rikki Jai] who manages to combine the notion of sexual prowess and rum drinking in his chutney song. In addition, most of these songs, whether calypso or chutney, operate out of a decidedly heterosexual, hypermasculine culture of braggadocio. On this issue, Rohlehr notes, "Masculinity is here, as elsewhere, associated with championship. Its ethos is that of the gladiator. Love-making occasions are bouts, fights; the penis is a powerful fist, its thrust has the force of a knock-out punch" (2004, 340). Equally important, however, is Rohlehr's observation about men's boasting: "All of this boasting — made more obvious through the protagonist's repeated denial that he is boasting — is done not only to attract the woman, but to rile and triumph over rival males..." (2004, 340). Rohlehr captures very pointedly here the fact that masculinity is not merely performed for women but seeks the approval and recognition of other men; it is a source of validation of one's maleness. The heterosexism in the calypso can also be seen in the derision that is reserved for homosexual men. Calypsonians would taunt each other in song about homosexuality, but by comparison, calypso is not generally as homophobic as much of dancehall music, even though disdain for homosexual men is clearly expressed in such calypsos as Merchant's 'Norman is That You,' Young Exposer's 'Pepper in the Vaseline,' Calypso Rose's 'Man Doing it Too,' Bomber's 'Ma Ma Men' and perhaps the most popular song of this genre, Lord Shorty's 'Man for Kim,' which was sung by other male calypsonians.

The calypsonian's performance adds dimensions to the song that can often only be performed and not verbalized. A classic example of this would be Lord Funny's calypso about a 'Dumb Boy and the Parrot' in which, to the listener, the chorus of the song was made up of simulated and incomprehensible sounds of a person who is unable to speak. These sounds were, however, made understandable when Funny demonstrated in live performances on stage what this speech-impaired young boy had been seeing and was trying to communicate. Part of Funny's performance of the calypso had to do with the

gestures, the glances, the facial expressions, the gyrations, and the unspoken choreography that were demonstrated on stage at a tent² by the calypsonian. There are many calypso fans who go to the tents to hear and see their favorite artists perform with the full knowledge that they may never hear that song on the radio, see it on Youtube or hear it on a compact disc. Not all calypsonians record their songs; nevertheless, they remain enormously popular among the knowledgeable calypso audiences, who go as much to see the performances as to hear the lyrics. To the uninitiated, Lord Brigo's songs may not be particularly appealing, but to see Brigo's facial contortions when he is delivering his calypsos is the only way to appreciate what this calypsonian does for his lyrics. He is referred to in jest as the ugliest calypsonian today.

Other calypsonians have other attributes: Crazy has his crazy antics, Trinidad Rio's physique is very cleverly incorporated into his performance, and Sugar Aloes and Baron's stylish dress, excessive gold jewelry and mellifluous singing voices add luster to their performances. The Mighty Sparrow and the Lord Kitchener are both impressive on stage. Though having different styles, they both demonstrate great showmanship, stage performance and control of the audience. In addition, their calypsos are skillfully crafted, witty, analytical, yet rhythmic and engaging.

The contribution of women to the performative aspect of the calypso should not be ignored. Though not all women condone the messages contained in the calypso, many of them who patronize the tents respond positively to the songs, encourage the calypsonian to elaborate on his theme, and engage in risqué repartee with the singer. Many an exuberant female fan has been known to leave the audience to join the calypsonian on stage in a display of sexualized simulations. There is, therefore, a need to investigate the ways in which women, both as artists and as audience members, participate in and contest what Anne McClintock, writing in another context, describes as "the male fetish rituals" of performance and calypso (McClintock 1996). The behavior of women in this context also points to the extent to which they may

indeed be responding in terms already predetermined by the dynamics of male power and sexual response discussed above. These activities also point to the fact that the female presence, approval and participation in the live performance of the calypso all contribute to this issue of gender and performance. Moreover, the centrality of women to the performance and subject matter of the calypso foregrounds this art form in many ways. In short, in the context of the calypso, performance is as much an act of manifesting gender as it is about creativity.

To ignore the performance of the calypso is to miss one of the truly important aspects of this art form. Audiences play an important part in quickly evaluating the performance of the calypsonian and have over the years developed a battery of responses to mediocre and poor performances, not all of which are polite, that they then offer as “feedback” to the artist.

How then does all this relate to notions of masculinity? Gordon Rohlehr mused that the calypso is an overwhelming tradition of recorded masculinity (Keynote address, 1996). Not only is the calypsonian mostly male, but images of social reality are also filtered through the male gaze. The calypso becomes a medium through which men tell of their sexual exploits, their fantasies, their imagined power over women, their vulnerabilities, as well as inform the nation of the ills of the government; through it they are generally provided the space to do and say that which they could not otherwise say in public. One of the more interesting aspects of the calypso is that it provides a medium through which men explore what they consider to be important to their own subjectivity.

Male Preoccupations

In ‘Man Like to Feel,’ the Mighty Sparrow expresses some of the concerns that men have in their relationships with women. Interestingly enough, his first concern is with the question of size, both in terms of physique and in terms of

sexual endowment. He expresses these concerns not so much as part of his own preoccupations but in terms of offering to women a blueprint for maintaining relationships with men.

I am outlining a simple plan
How every woman could tie up deh man
A man like to feel big although he small
A midget does want to feel ten feet tall
So you could keep him under your heel
Just let him feel how he want to feel

In his next verse Sparrow becomes more explicit about the preoccupation with this question of size and sexual performance. He notes:

A man like to feel he is a big wheel
Big in every way
And he like to feel that he girlfriend feel
He greater than Cassius Clay

Penis size is perhaps a universal male preoccupation, but it is also a concern of some women. Caribbean men are in no way immune from such concerns. The popular culture is replete with anecdotes about penis size. In the emotionally charged context of sexuality and male virility, many men seem to be convinced that bigger is infinitely better. The calypsonian, therefore, returns to this subject continually with greater and taller tales about the fear, amazement or incredulity that the size of the penis elicits among women. Rohlehr's observation here is again quite telling:

The calypso ['Man Like to Feel'] maintains that any man who seriously believes in any of the popular constructions of masculinity, from the warrior-hero to the dandy, lover, saga boy, cocksman and domestic slave-master, is a fool living in a world of illusion (2004, 355).

Kitchener's 'Dr. Kitch' focuses on this very topic, with Kitchener assuming the role of a doctor who has to administer an 'injection' to a young lady:

I am not a qualified physician
And a don't want to give this injection
I am not a qualified physician
And a don't want to give this injection
Dorothy is begging for trouble
She insist I should give her this needle
But darling one thing I want you know
Don't blame me for where the needle go

Chorus:

I push it in
She pull it out
I push it back
She start to shout
Doctor Kitch, is terrible/
I can't stand the size of your needle.

What is remarkable is that even when the calypsonian employs the use of allegory, he finds a way to address the issue of penile dimension. In 'Animal Beauty Contest,' Sparrow rather humorously and cleverly conjures a situation of an animal beauty competition in which the monkey assumes the role of judge and proceeds to evaluate the contestants of the pageant. What follows with respect to the judge's (monkey's) decision requires no explanation:

So he throw out peacock, he say he too vain
And disqualified lion with his long flowing mane
But he watching donkey, in one particular spot
Ladies and Gentlemen, monkey say
Look what beauty this fellow got

He give donkey first, second and third
And the judge tell lion flat
If you was the king of the beast
You would've been toting that

Rohlehr aptly describes this phenomenon of figurative speech in the following manner:

The calypso outwitted censorship and spoke about sexuality behind its thin mask of metaphor, thus maintaining a tradition of primal discourse even as it emerges from the controlled spaces of gayelle and tent into the "moral light" of the public forums, where overt acknowledgement of celebration of sexuality has long been censored (2004, 341).

To return for a moment to Sparrow's 'Man Like to Feel,' the concerns that are being expressed here have to do with the fashioning of a particular male subjectivity that begs for the overlooking of mental and physical flaws that normatively define an ideal masculine image. This issue becomes even more compelling in the following verse:

Man like to feel that he is superior
And feel that woman should feel they are inferior
He feel he should talk things he ain't know about
And feel very hurt if yuh buss he mouth
So when you feel he lie and feel he fooling you
Let he feel that you feel what he say is true
Always let him feel he is your ideal
And anything he feel let the damn fool feel

The Mighty Duke approaches the preoccupations of Caribbean men in a rather more subtle way. He uses irony to convey male anxiety in his calypso 'Trust Yuh Wife.' On the surface, it would appear as though Duke is venerating the character of women, but it becomes noticeable rather quickly that this

discourse not merely plays on the fears of men but confirms their worst nightmares. He starts off with a mild rebuff of men's lack of trust:

Some big men does wreck their life
Because they don't trust their wife
Big, big, big men does mash up their life
Because they don't trust their wife
They leave for work
They wife fast asleep
Round the clock they making bopeep
If she have to go to the lavatory
They handing the toilet paper for she

Duke argues that this type of supervision is useless because you cannot control a woman in this way. His remedy would appear to be to place more trust in one's partner.

For happiness in life
You have to trust your wife
Newsmongers making strife
Trust your wife
Your marriage last for life
As long as you trust your wife

Yet despite this assurance, Duke seemingly berates men for their poor judgment. In fact, Duke's use of irony while appearing to chide men ends up impugning women's fidelity.

You wife expect you home at four
What right have you in the house before
You want to surprise yuh wife you say
Ah bet you get a bigger surprise one day

Duke then seeks to reinforce his point in the next verse in which he says:

Some of them in mental shock
They pull the door before they knock
The worse thing any man could do
Is go back home when you wife not expecting you

'Trust Yuh Wife' fans the flames of male anxiety. This theme is repeated in the Mighty Shadow's 'Crazy Computer.' The theme is also a constant concern in the construction of masculinity and becomes crucial to an understanding of male performance, both in terms of men's roles and their sexuality. How men deal with this anxiety depends on how they negotiate their masculinity. Some men seek to confront their fears in an attempt to transcend them, while others retreat unto themselves for greater security. In 1990, Explainer pointed to one such self-help solution in the calypso 'Miss Palmer.'

I love Miss Palmer
In her arms I feel better
I love Miss Palmer
She lights up my fire
I don't have to fear any AIDS or herpes
Nor any kind of sexually transmitted disease
Neither no heart ache
Neither no heart break
Like milk and sugar we stick on together

In his masturbatory revelry, Explainer's friend Charlie addresses what is at the heart of male anxiety: preoccupation with competition from other males, as well as control over their partners. In this calypso Charlie says, "I don't have to fear if she's cheating on me." He elaborates:

He say Miss Palmer so loyal to me
No other man could take she from me
She's always with me wherever I go

That's why I say how I love her so
I don't have to care bout no maintenance fee
Because she's always there to lend a hand to me
Oh what a woman, a happy creation
I have the secret inside of meh hand
Oh, I love Miss Palmer

Explainer's alter ego in this calypso not only wants to fashion a particular type of female submissiveness but to restrict her mobility, while making little or no investment in the relationship. This type of scenario is so highly unattainable that it is small wonder that Charlie has to resort to pleasuring himself in flights of fantasy.

The most definitive response to these male preoccupations is articulated in Penguin's 'Soft Man.' 'Soft Man' is in effect a manifesto of a narrowly constructed hegemonic masculinity. Reflecting on this calypso, Gordon Rohlehr argues that "no other calypso offers a clearer delineation of the patriarchal mind set" (Keynote address, 1996). In this 1983 calypso, a friend of Penguin's, who is contemplating settling down and raising a family, seeks him out for advice on the best way to proceed in matters of maintenance of a relationship and treatment of a woman. Penguin counsels as follows:

I tell him to treat them kind
And they will love you till death
But one thing you have to bear in mind
And never, never forget
Woman don't like
Woman don't like
Soft man.

Soft man is a play on words in which the idea of a spineless and wimpy man merges with the image of a firm erection. Penguin makes this quite clear to his friend when he mused:

They want a man not a worm
Responsible and concerned
A man who lays down his terms
A man who could stand up firm

Penguin also advises his friend on how to be on guard against the type of woman who would 'mamaguy'³ and fool him, spend his money wantonly, and when he runs out of money, "She gone with a macho man." He also admonishes his friend to assert his authority and to be diligent about fulfilling his sexual responsibilities:

A man is supposed to lead
Supply all his woman's needs
Never make the yard get weeds
Dig the soil and plant the seeds

In the final verse of this calypso, Penguin offers what must be the ultimate construction of machismo to resonate in the masculine imaginary.

A man should be like a tower
Protect his household at any cost
Got to show strength and power
And show that he fit to be the boss
His children he must control
Don't make his woman look small
And if he live to a hundred years old
She wouldn't leave him at all

Among the most outstanding preoccupations of the Caribbean male reflected in the calypso, is his sexual prowess. This recurring theme will be discussed in the following section. Suffice it to say that this concern is conflated with essentialist conceptualizations of Caribbean masculinity. In 'Warning to Men,' Kitchener, in a direct discourse with Caribbean men, cautions them about

the physical conditioning necessary to achieve sexual satisfaction with their mates.

Well the men today
Must be fighting fit
Because, the women say
They not putting up with it
They complain strongly
Lack of energy
And now they out for war
They ain't standing for it no more

According to Kitchener, the consequences of lack of preparation and physical conditioning are the loss of female companionship and a life of loneliness.

So I am warning you gentlemen
Take it serious too, as a friend
If you can't respond
She's going to leave you, leave you, leave you all alone
You alone going to moan
And boy if you don't watch your case
Somebody going take your place

In a parting shot, Kitchener implores: "So fix your business right/ And start the ball rolling tonight." Kitch is not the only one to conflate sexual performance with the hegemony of heterosexual masculinity. Sparrow is one of the leading exponents of this discursive practice of masculinity. Note that in 'No Kind of Man,' this discourse on sexual performance or lack thereof by men is reflected through the agency of the woman. Indeed, such discursive practices underline the ways in which masculinity is always negotiated among men, as well as between men and women.

He ain't no kind of man at all
So why you wasting your time with he

If a woman ready and she out for blade
And the man lay down there, he can't make the grade
She should leave him
I say leave him
If he start with dou dou⁴, I ain't in the mood
What you doing with that man who refuse yuh food
You should leave him
Girl, leave him
He ain't no kind of man at all
No kind of man at all
Come on, enjoy yourself with me

Here Sparrow has no sympathy for indolent masculinity. Unlike Kitchener who in 'Warning to Men,' alerts other men to the consequences of their inaction, Sparrow counsels women to take corrective action and opt for a more virile man such as himself.

If you young and you strong
And you built for speed
And the fool can't give you the thing you need
You should leave him
I say leave him
When your eye get red and you in a heat
And he telling you he tired and he want to sleep
You should leave him.

As with Penguin's 'Soft Man' cited earlier, Sparrow rationalizes that penile erection is an all-important masculine signifier and, therefore, by extension, the absence of an erection results in what Carolyn Cooper calls 'diminished masculinity' (Cooper 1993).

Well any time he try to get your head confuse
By making a set of lying excuse
You should leave him

I say leave him
And if he drinking tonic for days and days
And no time at all the dead can't raise
You should leave him
I say leave him
He ain't no kind of man at all
He ain't no kind of man at all
So you, wasting yuh time with he

The one-dimensional view suggested in this calypso reduces the complexity of Caribbean masculinity to the act of sexual intercourse, excluding other features of its construction and disregarding any consideration of other forms of sexuality or other dimensions of a relationship. Having so indicated, however, one must hasten to add that it is in precisely the realm of heterosexuality that the calypsonian is at his most prolific, inventive and boastful. If performance characterized Caribbean masculine preoccupations, then exaggerated claims of sexual prowess in the calypso represent the corporeal reality of heterosexual manhood as seen through the lenses of the calypso.

The Calypso and Sexual Prowess

Sparrow's 'Village Ram' represents the ultimate in male braggadocio even though he tries to deny it in this song. Not only is he indiscriminate but he also envisions himself to be sexually competent beyond contestation.

Is me the Village Ram
I ain't give a damn
Is me the Village Ram
I ain't give a damn
Ah cutting down black is white
Man ah working day and night
If you have a job to be done

See me I ain't making fun

To the above assertion Rohlehr opines, "The Village Ram is a cock for hire. He is inexhaustible, aggressive, even violent..." (2004, 340). In the chorus, however, Sparrow's claims of sexual prowess assume unimaginable proportions.

Not a woman ever complain yet, with me
I ain't boasting but ah got durability
And if a woman ever say that I
Ever left her dissatisfied
She lie, she lie, she lie

The question that one is forced to ask after reading the above lyrics is why would any man feel motivated to enter such a claim? Perhaps men entertain such a thought due to the pressure they place on themselves, in conjunction with what must at some level be communicated from women to them, about the true measure of manhood. This is one of the ways both men and women participate in the construction of this particular type of mythology that inhibits the range of our contributions to relationships and structures our gendered behaviors. As part of the popular consciousness, it is then returned to us in the form of popular culture. There is a sense in which the calypsonian is both the conduit and purveyor of our sexual fantasies, beliefs, taboos, anxieties, transgressions and fears.

The assertion of sexual proficiency on the part of the Caribbean male is in no way diminished or compromised by physical disabilities, or at least this is part of the lore. Sparrow tells us in 'Fat Man,' for example, of how a particular woman had been misled into believing that because the man was overweight he would not be competent as a lover. She ends up being exhausted by her encounter with the 'fat man' and begs for relief. In 'One Hand Man' Sparrow also demonstrates how this disability was turned into an aphrodisiac that had women "running wild," and this, according to the calypsonian's account, occurred even though the 'one hand man' had a "face like a frying pan." On the

attraction of women to the 'one hand man,' Sparrow concludes, it was "the short piece of hand that they want in their possession"; it was this new turn-on that they were fighting for. That disability poses no handicap to sexual performance is also underscored in Sparrow's 'Benwood Dick.' Here, Sparrow is referring to a penile curvature, which is a medical condition described as Peyronie's disease. In Sparrow's comment on this medical condition, the protagonist proclaims this particular defect is part of his sexual identity, which he is convinced has left a lasting impression on at least one woman with whom he has had a sexual encounter and with whom he now wishes to reconnect.

A complement to the sexual prowess discussed above is the insatiability of the sexual appetite. 'More Cock' by the Mighty Sparrow is a calypso about a friend of his who started rearing a set of game cocks and whose live-in lover Judith began to complain about how "so much cock in the house had she basody."⁵

Wrong or right — Is cock
In the middle of the night — More cock
Sun or rain — Is cock
Sickness or pain — More cock
Tell you friend when you see him for me
This kind of thing wouldn't work
And if he don't to want to stop
I go kill the cock

Kitchener also addressed this theme of sexual insatiability and by extension durability. In 'Kitch Have No Season,' he tells of a female lover who complains to his mother about the excessive nature of his sexual demands:

At night when I sleeping
The beast wouldn't stop
If is one o'clock in the morning
He waking me up

Don't care how a plead to the fella
Don't care what I say
He would just ignore me completely
And have his own way

Having made the complaint, this woman attempts to persuade Kitchener's mother about how unreasonable his sexual desires are by reference to mating practices in the world of animals:

Cow had it season
Goat had it season
Cat had it season
And it stand for reason.
I coming like Rumpelstilskino
Plus a getting small
Mamayo, this dog Kitchener
He ain't have no season at all

This calypso is as much a boast about extended sexual stamina as it is a man's fantasy about making women beg for mercy and relief from male sexual power. In this calypso, the conjuring of this illusion takes precedence over the negative implications associated with appearing more unreasonable than the animals in the wild. This voraciousness recurs in Sparrow's 'Elaine, Harry and Mama' and in another of Kitchener's calypsos, 'Handy Man.' Here, the emphasis is on male preparedness for sexual activity.

Because I'm a handy man in the morning
Handy man in the night
Madam I'm a handy man, anytime I see work
Handy man 'round the clock

However, sexual preparedness is only one of the attributes allegedly held by the Caribbean male, at least in the calypso. Kitch points to a reservoir of infallible

knowledge, which he possesses as a presumably representative male, about the female anatomy:

She say, Kitch, I don't think it's right
Tell me why you like to work at night
I say, madam, you see when the weather cool
It's easier to use me tool
She say, but Kitch, you can't see to do it neat
I say, madam, I don't have to see to eat
And for the time I using this broom
I could shut me eye and clean out your room

In the calypso, eating is almost always a sexual metaphor. Sparrow uses this metaphor in 'No Kind of Man,' cited earlier. He also uses it more extensively in the 'Congo Man' and 'Sixty Million French Men' and again in his 'Elaine, Harry and Mama.' This metaphor can also be found in Mighty Terror's 'Yankee Woman ain't Cooking Sweet.'

In addition to the store of information about the female anatomy mentioned above, some calypsonians, like other Caribbean men, also presume to possess a more generalized knowledge about women, the Mighty Sparrow being chief among them. In 'Bag ah Sugar' his boast is rooted deeply within the folk culture of the Caribbean and in many African countries, and appears to offer his reflection some legitimacy.

Even a fortuneteller
Couldn't tell you more bout woman than me
Don't care how a woman clever
I sure I smarter than she
I could size up any woman in here, or on the street
Even though we have never met
I could tell you if she sour, if she salt
If she sweet, if she easy or she hard to get

Note that this knowledge of women's disposition is not based on any scientific information but on hunches gleaned from folk beliefs that stereotype, caricature and fetishize certain physical characteristics of women as being important to an understanding of their sexual proclivities.

For if her eyes start becoming kind of sleepy
When you watch she fix
My advice is to take it kind of light
Maybe she is out for tricks
But if she smile with dimples on she cheek
And then she laugh and she got open teeth
Don't let she get away
She have a bag o' sugar down deh

This objectification of women is richly encased in Caribbean humor emerging out of the folk culture of the region. In this calypso, the pursuit of the 'bag ah sugar' becomes an all-consuming passion that supersedes the exploration of other social and intellectual interests that could be developed out of meaningful relationships with women. What is evident in this calypso, as in some of the others cited in this paper, is how the discourse on masculinity and/or sexuality takes place among men directly, with no other interested party addressed in the communication. Conversely, the discourse could be directed toward women in the form of an apparent critique of male behavior that, however, simultaneously communicates to women information designed for the benefit of the former. The alternative format is to address other men, while affording women the opportunity to eavesdrop on the conversation. In short, what we have in the calypso is a public space in which men construct, negotiate and dislocate different notions of masculinity by recounting stories and using the folk narratives, some of which no doubt are autobiographical, but all of which take place within the context of this unique art form of the Caribbean.

Conclusion

In the themes explored in this essay, there is some consistency in their construction of masculinity, as seen through the prism of the calypso. However, there is already some indication that different constructions of masculinity will become a part of the discourse of this art form. This change can already be seen in the work of such calypsonians as Mighty Chalkdust and Black Stalin, among others. Feminist contestation of the objectification of women in the calypso, as well as a growing political awareness of gender issues, will ultimately affect the way men think about women in song. This is not to suggest, however, that the kind of calypsos men make in the future will be entirely free of sexist stereotyping and misogyny but rather to suggest the possibility that a greater range of constructions of Caribbean masculinity will emerge in the future.

It is important that we bear in mind that despite the themes explored in this paper, they do not exhaust the range of topics addressed in the calypso even though they may constitute a particular core. Neither should one conclude that these are the only ways in which men view themselves, their sexuality and their relationships with women. The themes explored above do represent fairly popular ways in which these issues have been treated in the past and continue to be explored and debated in song in the wider Caribbean society. If gender is related to performance as suggested by Butler, then the calypso provides men with an arena for display and role rehearsal, and over the years calypsonians have certainly taken the opportunity it offers, to imagine who they are as gendered subjects. As stated earlier, the views expressed in the lyrics of many of the calypsos cited above may not be representative of all Caribbean men but they are formed and fashioned in the context of the popular culture of the region. Popular discourse is not without a material base, it is the product of sustained interaction of individuals in the process of social reproduction. To the extent that the calypso continues to have such a base, one must conclude that these ways of approaching masculinity in the calypso bear some resonance among Caribbean men and should not be discounted as

having been created entirely for the purposes of entertainment. Rather what is being suggested here is that the calypso should be mined for sociological and anthropological insight into Caribbean masculinity.

¹Indeed, performance in calypso had an early link to the theater, in so far as calypso skits were part of this art form during the 1920s (see Hill, 1993). Among the calypsonians involved in this aspect of the art were Atilla, Lord Executor and Lord Inventor. These early shows developed into calypso dramas, which were performed between 1933 and 1966, but, according to Hill, never constituted a major aspect of the general performance (Hill, 1993: 149).

²The Calypso tent is the venue where concerts or calypso shows are held. This site could be a school, a public auditorium or a specially constructed arena. According to Donald R. Hill (1993), the calypso tent was established around 1899, "in the masquerade camps of the major social unions of Port of Spain and the large towns of Trinidad" (p. 64). The Tent in this sense does not refer to a portable shelter made of canvas.

³"Mamaguy" is a French Creole word that means to flatter, mislead, manipulate, deceive, and/or misrepresent.

⁴"Dou dou," sometimes spelled "doo doo," is a Caribbean Creole term of endearment.

⁵A Caribbean Creole word meaning to confuse or to disorient.

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Fragile Masculinities: The Loss of Young Men and the Pervasive Models of Masculinity in The Bahamas that Encourage them to Fail

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Abstract

Even in predominantly black countries, young, black working-class males are seen as criminals. They are taught that they are violent and have few possibilities in life. The system is created to frustrate and retard their development. At the same time, they are fed a diet of images from popular culture that show black masculinity as bling-focused and violent, as well as cash-rich. They see that males are defined through women, sex, wealth and toughness but not through education, knowledge and good behaviour. The Caribbean, and particularly The Bahamas, has become a site where young, black males are socially excluded and so begin to react against this. Social exclusion is also based on their ethnicity. The system tells young men that they must behave a certain way and have the money to do so, but it also bars them from access to that space and the money to be able to enter that space legally. Meanwhile, a great many of the male role models they see around them perform the same kind of masculinity they are told is not for them because they are not of that social group. Politicians and rich tycoons behave badly in public and boast about beating women. What other examples do these young men see?

Key Words: Masculinity, youth, violence, neocolonialism, social exclusion, poverty, bling, structural violence.

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In reading Junot Diaz's most recent collection, *This is How You Lose Her*, I was reminded of the fragility of masculinity in the region. Working-class non-white masculinity has come under attack from many directions of late. It is defined by violence, lack of performance, underachievement, drug dealing, underemployment, multiple families, with high levels of fatherlessness. I was also troubled recently by what seems to be the proliferation of images of young black male prosperity through illicit means.

Diaz's work was troubling because it seemingly reinforced all those old stereotypes that Latinos and blacks, and especially writers from both groups who move to the metropolitan centres, write against. We see the counter-argument in works by writers such as Patricia Powell, Dion Brand, Thomas Glave, and others. The currency of the images depicted in literature then becomes another issue. Diaz's male characters re-inscribe the image of the Latino as a lover, a womanizer, a loafer and layabout, and he makes his men sleep with as many women as possible. The violence depicted is not only external to the characters but also internal. Violence is self-inflicted as well as externalized. Is it that the mother who is overly violent towards young boys creates such damaged characters? Or is it because the mother is seen to be too submissive to male privilege and abuse from her husband that her sons are encouraged to replicate the same behaviour they saw from their father. Further, there seems to be lack of empathy or respect for self or others in the lives of Diaz's characters. These thoughts made me relate this text to a troubling reality that seems far too prevalent in the Caribbean/Latin American region and, particularly, in the tiny Bahamian archipelago where the murder rate currently exceeds that of Jamaica.

Young men are captivated by the image of themselves as being sexually aggressive and are eager to show their prowess, which serves well the national imaginary. The images created through Diaz's novel find resonance in the history of the plantation colony, as well as the images of paradise. His male characters are *hombres*, *mujeriegos*, who are misogynists and bad fathers. They

do not speak back to history, but rather speak to history in its rendering of them as the *status quo*. Such images of Latino and black masculinities are widespread and have a particular saliency in the market economy (Watson and Shaw 2011). Today, young men in the Caribbean struggle with a masculine identity that is tenuous and fragile (Kimmel 2008). It is fragile because it is always based on something external to them. They are unable to create any real agency in their lives because they are often rendered silent by the discourse of late capitalist consumption and the market economy which has done a great deal to reverse many of the gains made during the early days of postcolonialism. bell hooks provides a phrase that I think captures this reality exceptionally well. She refers to it as "*imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchy*". "This phrase is useful precisely because it does not prioritize one system over another but rather offers us a way to think about the interlocking systems that work together to uphold and maintain cultures of domination," she said (hooks 2013, 4). Theoretically speaking, The Bahamas' system of rigid class segregation and white domination ended only in the 1960s, which suggests that the system could be more closely related to the US system than that in other Caribbean countries. What is interesting, though, is the resurgence of a local white elite, a resolidification of the distance and divide between them and the black working and middle class, and the entrenchment of a black elite, who, since the independence movement's success, has sought only to empower itself. So, notwithstanding that the country is majority black and blacks hold political power, the white elite hold economic power while transnational corporations usurp more of the country's earnings and land. Meanwhile, young black males are still treated as a dangerous minority (Bethel Bennett 2010). "In other words, a sense of shared identity is no longer a platform that can draw folks together in meaningful solidarity" (hooks 2013, 2). It would seem, therefore, that the sense of a shared future and identity that drove the independence movement has been replaced by factions that can no longer work together towards a common goal. The authorities see it as incumbent on them to criminalise black males, and the power structure frustrates those males' efforts at escaping the structure and stricture of poverty and failure.

This system has translated into frustration for many working- and even middle-class youths, especially males. Young people, in general, feel unhappy with where they are and feel that they have few options to change their situation. They have invested a great deal of currency in popular music and popular culture as well as in the local manifestations of these. This means that a great deal of energy is consumed in trying to participate in the latest fads and trends. They feel that this is their way of asserting an identity. The lifestyle of a drug dealer also holds an allure because of the street credit or “respect” he earns. His largeness of personality, clothing and bling, as well as his ability to spend seemingly without limit, win him great admiration.

In focus group discussions in The Bahamas over the last three years, a great deal of information was gathered about the ways young people perceive the violence in their society. They feel far more concerned about the violence than they do about the political economic crisis. This fact leads them to focus on surviving and acting out their anger and frustration by negative means. The Bahamas has a serious problem with violence, both gender-based and male on male — which is often not seen as being connected to gender — as well as with sexual violence. In all the aforementioned areas of violence The Bahamas has ranked among the top ten countries if not the top five in the region, according to the World Bank Report (2011). The Bahamas, a country that relies heavily on tourism for its livelihood, has witnessed increasing numbers of attacks on tourists, from the rape of a teenage girl during the summer of 2013 to the murder of a tourist male in the late spring to early summer of the same year. All of this has led the United States to put out a travel advisory against the country. Further, cruise companies have begun to warn tourists about having or wearing anything of value in Nassau.

The situation has deteriorated dramatically since the Progressive Liberal Party took office, after a sizeable victory in the May 2012 general election in which they campaigned on a platform to get tough on crime. Within hours of

their winning, the murders had recommenced in earnest. The commissioner of police responded to the upsurge with a statement that crime is down. It must be remembered that information is jealously guarded in The Bahamas, and so the commissioner must request permission from the Prime Minister before making statements on such matters. The Official Secrets Act mandates such deep silence. When I began to write this paper in August 2013 there had already been 80 murders for the year, and each weekend witnessed on average three or four more. A striking and alarming murder recently that was discussed in some detail in one focus group was that of a male playing dominoes in someone's backyard. He was recorded to have lived in the Kemp Road area, one of the more dangerous parts of New Providence, an island that is 21 miles long by seven miles wide and that is home to the majority of The Bahamas' over 360,000 inhabitants. Bahamians blame the crime and murder rate on the Haitians, the largest immigrant group living in the country. There are sizeable Haitian shanty towns as well as more permanent communities across the inhabited islands. The shanty towns are usually supplied with utilities, given their longstanding existence. Two examples of these are The Mud and the Pigeon Pea, in Marsh Harbour, Abaco; another one exists off Joe Farrington Road in the Eastern District of New Providence that was gutted by fire in the summer of 2013. As stated, most Bahamians have continually blamed the Haitians for the large-scale increase in violence. However, facts or statistics seem to indicate otherwise. A study on crime and the inmates of Her Majesty's Prison at Fox Hill, New Providence, conducted by a team of professors from the College of The Bahamas (COB), showed the presumption and ethnic bias to be unfounded. Their results indicate that most of the inmates interviewed were, in fact, Bahamian. They were overwhelmingly male and overwhelmingly represented the lower class of the country. These results will be examined more closely as this paper develops. The COB study will be discussed along with a documentary by Dr. Ian Strachan, *I's Man* (2013), and conversations with groups of youngsters from the COB. This paper will also draw tangentially on developments over the last few years in which men in positions of authority empower persons who have acted and acquired possessions illegally. It will also highlight two members of

parliament who in their professional capacity have been abusive to women or boasted about having been so, further rein-scribing the notion that women should be treated violently and that men have the right to use violence.

The paper will argue that the fragility of manhood or masculinity is a national problem that is in part based on a lack of humanity and a desire for richness that transcends the legal structure as well as the individual's abilities. Black masculinity has been entombed in an apparent lack of potential for success, lack of humanity and dearth of mainstream, culturally valued experience. Young black males in The Bahamas, despite the country being majority black, are treated as if they are criminals. This is borne out by the numbers of young males incarcerated, and their high high-school dropout and low educational attainment rates. To put it in succinct terms, The Bahamas is experiencing high male failure. However, this statement is too much of a generalisation when all the information is considered. Young, working-class black males form the majority of the group that is failing. Yet, even the word failing is too much of a generalisation. One of the premises of this paper is that many of the young men from the working class are taught not to look far beyond their current positions, though their current positions are barely above abject poverty. Yet, they are cash rich. They are also taught that what they see is what there is. However, in the tourist economy, there is always the possibility of gaining access to what the tourist is perceived to have.

Young Bahamians are encouraged to become servers in the tourist enclaves where they will be constantly confronted by what they do not have. At the same time, the construction of black masculinity must be substantiated by being the ideal exotic black male for the white gaze. Again, this means that there is a lack of emotional and other kinds of investment in the youth in their homes and communities. Young men and women today are encouraged to pursue service jobs because they are the hot commodity. These are the jobs the government promotes for the working class. Young, working-class men, as has been revealed in class discussions, are esteemed by tourists, and the former see

this as their ticket to riches. They do not aspire to much beyond participating in bling culture or being the next drug barren because they are not taught to do so, nor are they told that anything other than what they see is possible for them to aspire to. Their masculinity is bound up in their sexuality and is also limited by the same. While this paper does not per se explore the sex tourism aspect of the resort destination, as have other works by Emilio Pantojas and Kamela Kempadoo, for example, it does seek to underscore the significant role of tourism's power in creating men. Michael Kimmel has an interesting position that serves us well in this context. "Masculine identity is born in the renunciation of the feminine, not in the direct affirmation of the masculine, which leaves masculine gender identity tenuous and fragile" (Kimmel 2008, 137).

Kimmel's quote is an excellent jumping-off point for the discussion on young Bahamian or Caribbean identity in the early twenty-first century. Not only does it show how contradictory or reactionary masculine gender identity is, but, if based on white masculinities, non-white masculinities may be considered that much more tenuous and fragile because they are always contestatory and determined by a power external to them. They are always defined by the white patriarchal power, as bell hooks maintains, and rarely, if ever, by the attempt to disentangle themselves from it. Often, when black man attempts to liberate himself from the prison of white patriarchal-determined masculinity, his efforts are thwarted by, as hooks states, his falling into the trap of rebelling against the system while having no clear image of how he wishes to define himself. Hooks' *Writing Beyond Race* is also instructive here, as it shows the problematics of racism when we say that we have moved beyond race. So, if black men are constantly defined by white patriarchy to fit into roles that have been prescribed, how does racism cease to exist simply because a black male is president of the United States? Moreover, if non-white masculinity is hemmed in by desires such as jungle fever and fear of the other that pose a threat to one's civility, how does the poor, under-educated, black male cast off such a straitjacket?

In the neoliberal moment, masculinities are interestingly defined by Hollywood or media. Magazines show pictures of who men are or are meant to be — according to them, at least. TV shows capture images of men and project those into the imaginary and thus the psyche of the viewers. Hooks underscores this in her book *We Real Cool* (2003). I would argue further, especially given the consumerism of the neoliberal moment, as Naomi Klein establishes in *No Logo*, we are defined by the lifestyles we are sold. Marketing, therefore, no longer sells a product but rather an entire image and lifestyle that go along with that product. Tommy Hilfiger, for example, despite his apparent discriminatory comments about minorities in the USA using his clothes, had a particular currency in working-class and poorer communities. This was their sign of having arrived. Their Air Jordans, at the time were also a marker of success. It is significant then that poor, black and Latino youth are often consumed by consumption. They are also defined by that which they wear, and to wear designer clothing is to make a statement about one's ability and one's worth. This again underscores the fragility and tenuousness that Kimmel discusses. I would argue that this tenuousness and fragility is even more characteristic of youth who, even though brought up in predominantly black or Latino countries, consume an enormous amount of American Culture, so that *No Logo* and neoliberalism define them as much as they define young Americans.

According to Buerkle (2011), we are defined by what we buy or by what the media tells us we are. The images of self inscribed on young, non-white males are those of the muscular young thug ready to fight; the successful hip hop artists surrounded by women and bling; the professional athlete surrounded by beautiful women, all of whom are inferior to him. Media determines how those young men see themselves. This conflates with the local reality where many of the young men then act out these roles. They see themselves in these images and choose to become them. They find acceptance there. The focus group discussions mentioned earlier revealed these tendencies. Furthermore, women accept this image of men and reinforce the idea that men must be able "to pay to play" in local parlance. In other words, they must be able to

provide hair, nails and phone card money, among other essentials. Thus, the young men become further entrapped in this materialistic neoliberal prison of consumer masculinity and they perform accordingly.

Men are told that they are to serve the women, and especially tourist women. Once again, their masculinity, as hooks observes, goes back to being defined by their sexual organ. The negotiations that take place are often constructed around or through uneven power relations. Workers are aware of their relative poverty when compared to the tourists' assumed, and often apparent, wealth. The Trevor Rhone play *Smile Orange* explores this well. Notwithstanding the time gap between the current day and Rhone's play, the power imbalance has not changed. What has been altered is the reliance on tourism, and the images that have been sold to the consumer are now far more pervasive. The former has become more widespread and almost complete, providing much of The Bahamas' GDP. The latter is now also more dangerous as it sells at home and abroad. The tourist ad lures the local as well as the tourist into a fantasy. However, the local is also encouraged to believe that this job can change his life. He has seen the images on TV as well as in movies and is convinced that this could be him. So the local youth is in many ways doubly caught because he is at once the subaltern being consumed and the one who consumes. Ultimately, as hooks and Buerkle maintain, he consumes the image that is packaged for him, oftentimes unmediated because of a lack of family or parental input, education and training that could provide a counterbalance to the allure and caché of the image of black, cool masculinity.

Further, the images around young men, notwithstanding the official discourse that boys need to succeed in school, demonstrate everything other than academic success. Meanwhile, locally, men are taught that education creates soft men or sissies. Young men are increasingly dissuaded from dreaming of academic or professional advancement because they understand that the cards are stacked against them. In an economy that has thrived on riches

gained through illicit means, they see their only options as being drug dealing, human trafficking or smuggling and hustling.

Male students, particularly, have often commented on the mistake I made in choosing to become a teacher; they insist that when they leave, they will be drug dealers as they will make more money. Success is thereby equated with monetary wealth. Wealth, as they say, can be used to wield influence. This thinking speaks to an overblown focus on the importance of wealth as a marker of success. However, the images shown to them through local media of local politicians embracing relationships with wealthy landowners have further inscribed this thought. The YouTube video of a wealthy Canadian tycoon “taking back The Bahamas” speaks concretely to this. The Caribbean, in general, and The Bahamas, in particular, have fallen victim to US consumerism and late capitalist greed. The role models established by men, like Allen Stanford in Antigua, who use the Caribbean as their kingdoms, are being followed not only by the young males on the streets or from the ghettos, but by the middle class who are leading the country. The models established by Fifty Cent, Vybz Kartel, Chris Brown, Kanye West and P Diddy/Sean Combs are what the young men long to follow. So, Jamaica’s Dudus Coke, the notorious and violent drug lord, is an example of the allure of the bad man in the community. He has currency. He has provided the community with tangible leadership that they feel they need. Coke provided support, financial consideration and mentorship, as well as fathered many children and acted as a father figure in communities that looked up to that kind of example. His support and assistance led to their protection and defence of him in violent clashes with Jamaica’s security forces in 2011. His counterpart in The Bahamas would be Ninety Knowles, whose community came out to protest when the Bahamian government threatened to comply with a United States extradition order. Knowles, a well-known and celebrated drug baron, much like Coke, offered his community tangible wealth. He also fathered many children with girls in the community. Both these men kill and get others to kill for them. They are mean and tough and demand respect. They offer an interesting balance between fear and love that bring about

devotion. The devotion, though, is often premised on a great deal of respect based on fear. Diana McCaulay illustrates this with tragic clarity in *Dog-Heart* (2010). Deborah Thomas explores these kinds of characters, their influence and impact on their communities in her work *Exceptional Violence* (2011). Sadly, very little work has been done on the topics in The Bahamas. Suffice it to say, though, this masculine role model sets the trend and tone for young men's masculinities within a certain socio-economic sector.

This kind of misguided Robin Hood figure, or as Kimmel might say, misframed man, has become common in the region. Knowing the large and imposing impression these figures create in their communities inhibits the police from taking action against them; the police are often members of the same communities and are equally enmeshed in their sphere of power and influence. However, during the Tivoli Gardens debacle that centred on Coke, many young men that were perceived as being at risk or who were known to be moving toward a gang lifestyle were eliminated. Allegedly, the security forces used the opportunity to house clean. While this is a flagrant misuse of state power against the people, it is an excellent example of asymmetric power relations that create the initial problems and drive their perpetuation and deepening. It is the fragility of such masculinity constructed in this culture or environment that this paper explores. The irony of the situation, or at least one of them, is that Coke remained well protected as there were many politicians in his debt. The discussion around the known dons and gunmen who are on the platforms with politicians, giving them support, is infamous. It is speculated that for this reason the Coke debacle became such a long, protracted mark on Jamaican history. First, because he allegedly funded so many politicians, they were unable to accede to the US's request that he be extradited. Even when things got bad, Coke held too much power over and information on the government for them to accede to the US's demands and meet their legal obligations. This led to a massive illustration of masculine strength and ingenuity where, because of the fear and respect the community had for Coke, they willingly took on the police and the army. He had provided for them in far more tangible ways, as a

patriarch should, than had the government. He had played the father of the community role model. His bravado was famed and his violence infamous. So, he had created respect through fear. In a typical patriarchy, men tend to establish control through fear and also through paternalism; both of these attributes Coke manifested. He influenced many young men and women to follow his lead and his influence was seen as the spark that could fuel another generation of problem youth. When the standoff between the police and Coke's supporters was in full swing, the police and army, it has been speculated, took great pains to ensure that as few witnesses as possible were left alive. What is also significant here is that most of those who died were men. It has also been speculated through many unconfirmed yet disturbing reports that the opportunity was taken to eradicate a number of young males they foresaw as being potential troublemakers. They represented another danger of succession planning, as gangs are well-organised and oiled machines for dispossessed and disgruntled youth that provide them with a voice and a system of protection, as well as an avenue for building fear and respect. It is through violence and criminality that many of these young men now gain more street credibility and the masculine card. Gangs have in many respects become the new family in an age where family is failing for numerous reasons. Further, a role model like Coke provides a male presence and male modelling that many young black males do not otherwise have access to.

So, even while Coke was arguably a model of working-class masculinity, his fame transcended that position, and became a much more transgressive type of masculine power that was viewed as desirable. Coke held the reins to many politicians' careers through his monetary contributions to their campaigns and their pockets. He, notwithstanding his size, was violent and unflinching, and held the supposed upper crust in subservience because of his money and callousness. This again underscores why so many young men see this way of life as being desirable. They desire that kind of influence. They want people to respect them. They ultimately see replicating such damaged role models as being their only chance at notoriety and success. It offers riches, bling and great

influence. The other irony here is that Coke is a very small man, and even after the huge masculine bravado of his crime spree and his influence over Jamaican politics, he attempted to flee dressed as a woman. The irony was not lost on critics. This model of unforgiving, intransigent, tough masculinity stems from a violent history of slavery, colonialism and imperialism in the region that then extends to the postcolonial period where little changes, but rather the same tools are deployed to disempower and disenfranchise non-white youth. Similarly, this failed system perpetuates itself when men are not charged for rape or are released due to a mistrial after they have raped young women in their communities.

These failures send a disturbing message back to the community that rape is acceptable. It also arguably demonstrates that men are free to rape women as they wish. It does not challenge the social construct of gender, but reasserts it. Men are given male privilege that allows them to perform their masculinity as they wish. Their sexual prowess cannot be controlled and their violence is held to be natural (Kegan Gardiner 2000, 2004, 2004; Kimmel and Aronson 2000). This idea of masculinity is challenged in the following statement by Judith Kegan Gardiner:

[the] most important accomplishment of 20th-century feminist theory is the concept of gender as a social construction; that is, the idea that masculinity and femininity are loosely defined, historically variable, and interrelated social ascriptions to persons with certain kinds of bodies — not the natural, necessary, or ideal characteristics of people with similar genitals. This concept has altered long-standing assumptions about the inherent characteristics of men and women and also about the very division of people into the categories of “men” and “women.” The traditional sexes are now seen as cultural groupings rather than as facts of nature based on a static division between two different kinds of people who have both opposing and complementary characteristics, desires, and interests. By seeking to understand the causes, means, and results of

gendered inequality, feminist theories hope to develop effective ways to improve women's conditions, sometimes by making women more similar to men as they are now, sometimes by making men more similar to women as they are now, sometimes by validating women's traditional characteristics, sometimes by working toward the abolition or minimizing of the categories of gender altogether, but all simultaneously transforming ideologies and institutions, including the family, religion, corporations, and the state. (Kegan Gardiner 2000, 35)

This is a significant moment and represents a departure for Caribbean masculinity studies in particular as it articulates that there needs to be an interrogation of the ways in which culture determines the roles women and men are allowed to play in their countries. Men, as aptly laid out above, are given the role of aggressor and leader, a person who should be rich and respected and/or feared. So, the socially accepted performances of masculinity, as the book *Performing American Masculinities* (Watson and Shaw 2011) shows, are powerful dictates to continued gender inequalities. In the Caribbean, though, the performance of American masculinities as determined by popular culture is interestingly complicated and leads to serious social and cultural shifts. Linden Lewis argues that class must be added to the mix when we examine Caribbean masculinities because class is a determinant of access to power and so determines behaviour. I use this to underscore the fundamental import of class in understanding the performance of masculinities in The Bahamas. Young, black working-class males, notwithstanding the racial makeup of the country, are criminalized by the system. Many of the participants in the focus groups, especially the young, darker-skinned men, openly discussed their encounters with the authorities where they would be stopped when driving, told to get out of the car and often roughed up, slapped, and sometimes taken into custody for no clear reason, only to be later released without being processed. Can one argue that this is in part an adaptation of American popular culture or simply another symptom of the postcolonial state where, Fanon establishes, the colonised has learned to hate himself and so the leaders, having internalised

colonial hatred for blackness, work to marginalise their own? This is particularly pronounced with young Haitian-Bahamian youth. Class and ethnic discrimination against the Haitian population is overwhelming. The usual discourse of dangerous men applies here. Young men are perceived as being inherently dangerous and the cause of great social dis-ease. Yet, many of them, in seeking to rebel against the social exclusion they experience, play right into the socio-cultural norms hooks describes.

The Bahamas as a case study

In 2011 there was a debate in The Bahamas about young black men being criminals. The language followed that of the same debate in Britain in the post-2011 riots in London: black youth are a problem. A similar thread was carried in a Town Hall Meeting on crime in late August of 2013 in Nassau. People were of the view that all young black males were criminals and needed to be policed, a perception that had a great deal to do with violence; in particular, youth violence.

Whereas The Bahamas has never been as famed for its violence or even its youth-based or gender-based violence as Jamaica has, the recent developments show a different trend emerging. Because such violence in The Bahamas is a relatively recent phenomenon, work on the topic has been extremely limited. Meanwhile, work on the same in Jamaica has been far more commonplace. Two very interesting books on Jamaica were produced: one examined the role of elections, while the other examined violence in the country. Sieves and Thomas offer salient studies that go a long way in underscoring the theory and praxis of violence in Jamaica and their work should be extended to The Bahamas. Their work, I think, shows that racism is structural but also based on structural inequalities that have pervaded society and did not end with the close of the colonial period or the adventure into postcolonialism or neocolonialism.

What is ironic here is that the image of masculinity projected for all to see in the local context is that men can behave badly, in fact, are expected to behave badly. They can break the law and are above challenge. Yet, when young black men attempt to express themselves, they are quickly neutralised or frustrated by the authorities, as exemplified by the level of police brutality they are often subjected to. The focus group discussions and class exercise gave strong evidence of this well-known yet seldom discussed fact in the country. Young men are often picked up and detained for vagrancy (The Vagrancy Act 1939 still functions) and are beaten while in custody. The anger and frustration that this kind of marginalisation, exploitation and criminalisation causes runs deep. Once again, young men see this as yet another way that they are refused full citizenship in the country. They retaliate by acting out in the same ways that they are told not to do but have been shown are normal.

Recently, while I was driving in the vicinity of the local mall in Nassau, a police cruiser drew up beside three young men walking towards the mall. They were attired in the typical baggy clothes of their age with apparently “unkept” hair, yet they were clean, starched, and well-pressed. The police stopped, got out and started to frisk them. The only crime they had apparently committed was walking in a group while being black. These images are problematic as they simply re-inscribe the old paradigms of black youth as being dangerous; this is a paradigm that harks back to slavery and the colonial period. This is a particularly troublesome memory in The Bahamas where slavery has been greatly downplayed as being of a milder, gentler form. It is also significant because of tensions that developed among the white settlers who lived in constant fear of an uprising in The Bahamas after the 1804 Haitian revolution and the exodus of Haitians from Haiti. Many of those who left tried to land in The Bahamas and were summarily sent on for fear they would contaminate the local blacks.

Again, these facts are well documented by Tinker, Sears and Bethell, among others. The first substantial study on Haitians in The Bahamas by Dawn

Marshall underlined the discrimination against Haitians, but did not discuss the discrimination heaped on Haitian-Bahamians. This relationship has been troubled ever since the uprising began and has certainly been an ongoing part of Bahamian life. Haitians are argued to be a threat to civility and the Bahamian way of life. Ultimately, this has also created an underclass of young Haitian-Bahamians or BaHaitians that feel as if they are excluded socially, which they are. This social exclusion and the anger it fosters leads to enormous tensions and to the performance of more violence, especially in the form of gang violence. The Haitian/BaHaitian gang Zee Pound has become infamous for its activity in the country, according to the Organization of American States' (OAS) report on gangs and 'the Inter-American cooperation on dealing with criminal gangs' (2010). The anger of these young males is usually exhibited in anti-social behaviour, which is where gang membership becomes significant. Like the example above of the young men near the mall who were stopped by the police, BaHaitian youth are often the targets of discrimination and poor treatment by the authorities as well as their peers. Over the years, gangs have grown significantly, yet the authorities claim that there has been no organised gang activity. Gang violence, as has been stated in studies on Jamaica, has grown and changed the face of violence in many countries. This is certainly so in The Bahamas. Unfortunately, finding information on this has been all but impossible. The only information available is in newspaper articles and first-hand anecdotes of school violence, not in authoritative studies. At the same time, much effort has been made to keep this violence out of the press and to downplay it.

To be sure, the images the youth receive through the media and the social reality they face produce a confluence of influences that aggravate the gang-based violence in the country. This is particularly so in government schools where there are often gang-related attacks, beatings, stabbings, and shootings. Gang membership is often organised around communities, or areas, and also ethnicity, as indicated with the BaHaitians. These gangs come into contact with other gangs on school campuses, or at the gates, and violence erupts. The

police are often intimately involved, given that they are now, once again, on school campuses. The PLP government has brought them back onto campuses, after a period of absence during the last administration (2007–2012). The policing of schools, though, only seems to exacerbate the performing of violent masculinity, and the number of fights, mostly unreported, has skyrocketed,

What is developing is a normalising of violence at all levels. Young men see themselves portrayed only as violent perpetrators of wrong and so internalise this and begin to act accordingly. They are also the target of police and social frustration. Society feels unsafe and it collectively sees young males as the troublemakers. It therefore pushes for more policing. This only increases the frustration and anger of the young men who are the target of this prejudice. Moreover, as the economy worsens crime increases which leads to further distrust. However, there are a number of factors that need unpacking in this section. The role media imaging plays in all of this, which is in its turn re-inscribed by the politicians. The behaviour becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. In the case of the young men accosted by the police, they were accosted because they were black but also because they were dressed as befitting of young hiphoppers — baggy trousers hanging around their bottoms, underwear showing, and big shirts — an image popularized by media and internalised and owned by youth internationally. As argued in *Performing Masculinities*, especially in the chapter “Masters of their Domain” (Buerkle 2011), this neoliberal image is all that is seen. It is popular and so must be emulated. This is buttressed by other images of masculinity that show young men that this is what they can be, and ultimately what they are.

Concretely, while Hollywood projects images of black males that resonate with these youth, society is telling them that they are outcasts and must fit into a particular model of masculinity. This model, coupled with the images made popular by videos of hiphop artistes like Eminem, P. Diddy/Sean Coombs, Ludacris, R Kelly, among others, is what is available to them.

Ultimately, if we take a step back and examine the images portrayed through American popular culture of black masculinities, it becomes apparent that there are basically two choices open to young black males: They can be rappers/gangsters — tough men who wield power in their communities through violence and illicitly got means, much in the style of Coke. Or they can become an NBA star, for example, who controls through his strength and athleticism. Both of these men are desired. This interestingly holds true in an environment where black males are in apparent positions of power, as politicians, bank managers, and the like. Moreover, society's perception of many males in positions of relative power is that they are white or think of themselves as white. This again creates a demarcation between those who are darker and those who are lighter and excludes the former. I would argue that this is another indication of the general population's perception of their inability to access power and the success that being in those positions engenders. These observations have come from conversations in the focus groups and classrooms as stated above.

Of paramount importance to understanding the power dynamics in the Bahamian context is the need to comprehend that the white oligarchy that functioned pre-independence was never fully removed. They became the United Bahamian Party in the 1950s, after the establishment of the Progressive Liberal Party (PLP), and governed until the win of the PLP, majority rule, in the 1965 general elections. However, despite many of the gains made by a black middle class and a small black elite during the 1970s and 1980s, the white minority, otherwise known as the Bay Street Boys, has maintained its monopoly of the local economy. This functions in many ways to create perceived obstacles to advancement. Moreover, the control of the economy through Foreign Direct Investment also plays a part in discouraging young, black, working-class males from aspiring to mainstream leadership positions. The ambition of the 1950s' generation is considerably less in the children born in the 1990s and 2000s. Of course, as studies show, the images projected to black youth help determine the ways they see themselves. Their social context plays another part in this

equation. And this is where two salient studies in Jamaica are informative. One examines the impact of crime in the community on children (Crawford-Brown 2010), and the other the impact of popular culture on youth (Forbes 2010). Working together, they reveal how the surroundings really do work to crush or encourage progress. Crawford-Brown basically states that community-based violence severely scars the children who are brought up therein. Arguably then, the trauma and violence internalised become co-contributors to the performing of masculinity as evidenced. This is complicated further by the prevailing air of privilege ascribed to rich men who behave in unacceptable ways.

Again, in the Bahamian context, males in positions of power are often seen to be permitted to act as stated above. Two parliamentarians in the last year, 2013–2014, have exemplified this kind of patriarchal and misogynist privilege. In the first case, the member of Parliament made derogatory comments about one of his female colleagues as being an hysterical woman not comfortable (read not able to function) in a man's world. He was thus indicating that males control government and that women really have no place there. He then put his arm around her even after being warned to remove it. When she slapped him he claimed that she was crazy. All of this played out in the national media. The second example of such unacceptable, yet celebrated, behaviour was when a married member of Parliament boasted about beating his girlfriend, and that some women like to be beaten. He claimed he only left because he got tired of beating her. The others all laughed and the discussion was captured on TV. Nothing was said against the member until after the event. Despite the member's insisting that he was being truthful and serious, no action was taken (Aranha 2014). He later claimed that he was joking and that he supported women and offered a thousand dollar donation to the Crisis Centre. His colleagues silently supported him (Missick 2014, Jones, 2014, Dames 2014, Virgil 2014). These two examples only serve to underscore the rampant re-inscribing of the image of black men being abusive, violent, womanising, irresponsible individuals that is consonant with images from popular culture. Tragically, these are the same politicians closely implicated in another

national imbroglio while being entertained by a wealthy tycoon at his home, all of which was captured on YouTube.

The overriding stereotype of black masculinity in The Bahamas has become one of male privilege without responsibility. After the Youtube incident mentioned above went viral, the deputy leader of the opposition party requested the resignation of key members of Parliament due to their unacceptable behaviour at the house of the tycoon supporter, as seen in the video. The video on YouTube, titled Nygard Takes Back The Bahamas (2013), features ministers of government at a party that became infamous for its bad behaviour. Yet, the foreign tycoon has managed to acquire land for nothing, allegedly because of substantial political contributions. The debate has also played out in the local newspapers and in legal cases. Said individual has offered to create a new industry for stem-cell research in The Bahamas. Be that as it may, the ministers were caught in compromising behaviour with young women. Notwithstanding this public presentation of inappropriate behaviour, the ministers did not resign nor were they sanctioned. They stood as a beacon of acceptable and celebrated masculinity. Despite YouTube's impact and its publication of very dark details of grown men behaving badly, this culturally endorsed performance of masculinity where men allegedly have more than one woman, behave inappropriately, and use public office to empower questionable private citizens is celebrated. The younger generations have learned that they can emulate these role models without fear of being disciplined. At the same time, their behaviour is encouraged by many of the women in their lives. Meanwhile, theorists and critics argue that men are not moving quickly enough towards promoting gender equality. According to Kegan:

Poststructuralist feminist and queer theories American feminist journalist Gloria Steinem (1992) announces that "women want a men's movement" if that means men will "become more nurturing toward children, more able to talk about emotions," and less violent

and controlling (p. v). English psychologist Lynn Segal (1990) regrets the “slow motion” of men toward gender equality and muses that the literature of masculinity “uncannily mirrors” its feminist fore-bears: it “focuses upon men’s own experiences, generates evidence of men’s gender-specific suffering and has given birth to a new field of enquiry, ‘Men’s Studies’” (Kegan Gardiner 2004, 160).

The paradigm demonstrated in The Bahamas is troublesome as many of the young women in the focus groups who discussed female empowerment in their communities argued that men should dominate women. Their argument was partially biblical and partially financial. Some of them subscribed to the belief that once a man pays for a woman, she is his. This belief goes in tandem with the biblical interpretation that the man is the head of the woman and he must control her. Many of the students felt that men needed to be promiscuous as they could not control their urges and that they needed to behave violently as men are inherently violent, or more violent than women. Simultaneously, though, they complained about men not being socially or financially responsible. Many of the young women saw young men as being encouraged to be irresponsible and this was an attractive characteristic, until they wanted to settle down. They were also not sure what to make of the fact that young men did not see education as important. Yet, they also subscribed to the idea that education made young men soft, and many did not want “no sof’ man.” When discussing an essay, “The End of Men or the Rebirth of Class”, many of the students in a class of twenty, of which three were males, were troubled that there were so few young men in college, but saw it as normal. This trend is not surprising when hooks underscores the problems with young male failure and the racist architecture of the state. She argues that the poor or working-class man has been hurt — and sometimes hurts others — by being unable to live up to dominant definitions of masculinity

because he does not have the privilege or power society has taught him “real men” should possess. Alienated, frustrated, pissed off, he may attack, abuse, and oppress an individual woman or

women, but he is not reaping positive benefits from his support and perpetuation of sexist ideology [and so is] not exercising privilege. (hooks 1984, 73)

hooks builds on this in her later work. In *We Real Cool*, though somewhat less theoretically rigorous than her earlier work, she explores the ways in which white patriarchal power and society forces black men to react in particular ways. One of these ways is through gang culture or gangsta identity. They are told or sold that the only possibility they have of fitting in is through street culture, being violent, being cash rich, possessing bling and often using women to afford this lifestyle or doing so through other illicit means such as drug dealing. They are not allowed to fit in in a white, patriarchal world, according to hooks, and so feel that their masculinity is threatened by their inability to possess wealth, which the dominant discourse of masculinity tells them they must have. Fielding further works on this as it relates to educational attainment and the problems created by a lack of educational success.

Education and its role in Masculinities development

Perhaps one of the most revealing markers of youth trouble in The Bahamas is a World Bank 2010 report that underscores that education is the leading problem for industries that wish to do business in The Bahamas (Collie-Patterson 2008). Fielding, in his study on “Education: Attitudes and Achievement of Males and Females in The Bahamas”, highlights the World Bank study:

Between 1990 and 2010, although educational attainment increased, the education gap between males' and females' educational attainment has increased with greater proportions among females than among males being educated beyond high school (Fielding 2013, 6)

Fielding underscores, however, that aspirations are different in school as well.

“Throughout their time at school, males have lower aspirations than females towards academic attainment. The aspiration to attain academically decreases with the age of the student and is accompanied with disengagement of pupils and teachers” (Fielding 2013, 18). He focuses on the fact that

... there were different parent/guardian expectations of sons and daughters as to whether or not they wanted them to stay in education beyond high school. This disparity in expectations was observed from primary school... This divergence in expectation may be related to girls spending more time (9.5 hours per week) on school work at home than boys (6 hours) (Fielding 2013, 10).

Fielding further discusses the disparity between household expenditure on males and females. He notes that

... males are less likely than females to see the importance of higher education as a pathway to getting a ‘good’ job; also they are less likely to see the relevance of their school work beyond school, and this lack of purpose increases between grades 8 and 11 (Fielding 2013, 19).

It may seem paradoxical to a patriarchal state,

[h]owever, it should be noted that households spend more on their daughters than sons, at all stages of education (Table 59). The increased expenditure on females than males is noted throughout the various levels of household expenditure...This parental choice reflects the expectation of parents noted by students earlier...and shows that parental expectation is linked with parental commitment. (Fielding 2013, 40)

What is alarming and could perhaps bear out why there is a 2:17 ratio in favour of girls in many of the classes taught at the College of The Bahamas is what Fielding shows in his table 5.

Table 5:

Parents/guardians' expectations of their children to attend college.

	Females	Males	Percentage	Number
My parents want me to attend college/ university (strongly agree) (Primary school children)	80.5%	75.7%	0.006	505
My parents want me to attend college/ university (strongly agree) (Secondary school children)	76.5%	66.8%	0.002	929

Original Source: Bahamas Ministry of Education, and The College of The Bahamas (2009). [Survey of schoolchildren in The Bahamas]. Unpublished raw data (Fielding p. 10)

If, by the time students are in school, they are already segregated by sex and their attitudes to education and gendered roles are already being formed by their parents, it should be no surprise that the cultural performance of masculinity or gendered roles, in particular, is so entrenched. Young men are taught from early that they should not aspire to an education. By high school, this idea is apparently well ingrained, as Fielding points out above. Again, not surprisingly, by the time they have arrived at college, there are far fewer boys than girls (Chipman-Johnson and Vanderpool, 2003; Coalition for Education Reform 2005). In many English classes, which are a general education requirement, there will be an average of three men, at best, to seventeen women. These courses are not meant to be indicative of the entire system, but they do show that there are significantly reduced numbers of young men. So, in a third year writing course, there will be two males to seventeen females. When asked about this disparity, the boys say many of their peers feel that education is not important. They cannot hope to get jobs through education where they

can earn good money. They see construction and other such areas as being better avenues to earning a good wage. This is, though, class-based and cannot stand for the entire population. The College, in general terms, will get fewer of the elite students, as they will be sent off to study abroad. It will get more of the middle to lower middle and lower class students who are less able to afford foreign university study or will try to do it later on after they have done the first year or two at home.

These discussions with students in class served to underscore the social pressure on young middle- and lower-class males to move away from education, which is perceived as a soft option. Education, it is culturally believed, makes men soft. They also discussed the need to support the family. This demand for financial support was a massive pressure on males, especially those from single-parent households. They were encouraged to leave school and seek lucrative employment that would allow their siblings to eat, as well as reduce the pressure on the one parent in the home. This parent is usually the mother. The other factor that seemed to overwhelmingly influence male behaviour and productivity in the country was gang involvement.

Gang involvement and activity, as indicated above, have grown exponentially over the last 20 years. Fielding shows what a significant player gang involvement is in youth development.

Currently a member of a gang in grade 7, 6.3% of boys and 1.2% of girls in Grade 9, 7.4% of boys and 6.5% of girls and in grade 11 10.6% of boys and 0.0% girls were said to have participated in gangs. (Original Source: Ministry of Health, 2001; reproduced in Fielding p. 12)

Fielding goes on to discuss further what gang involvement says about the youth:

It should be noted that being a current member of a gang is associated with a range of antisocial behaviours and so may be an

indicator of other behavioural issues, which may be linked to school attainment, Table 13. For example: the frequency with which children take weapons to school is related to their GPA, with those who never take weapons having the higher GPA (Fielding 2013).

Table 13: Antisocial behaviours of males (in grades, 7, 9, 11)

	Still a gang member	No longer/ never been a gang member
Have ever been disciplined in school	87.2%	64.7%
Damaged school property 3 or more times	40.0%	7.7%
Had a fight with weapons 3 or more times in the last year	41.2%	5.6%
In the past month, carried a weapon to school, most of the time	21.6%	1.1%
Carry a weapon at other times, almost all the time	29.7%	3.1%

Original Source: Bahamas Ministry of Education and The College of The Bahamas (2009). [Survey of Schoolchildren in The Bahamas]. Unpublished raw data. (Fielding p. 13)

“Males in grade 11 who were not current gang members were more likely to plan to go to college than those who were still gang members, Odds ratio, 3.6 (95% CI: 1.2-11.1)” (Fielding 2013, 13). Once again, coupling this with group discussions, it seems that young men feel great peer and socio-cultural pressure to conform to cultural norms (Blank 2005). What has shifted, for example, is the image of responsible, proud, black males in the society. While it is hard to know exactly how black males saw themselves in earlier generations, the level of male educational attainment and participation in the formal economy was higher in times past. Further, even though young men were seen as troublemakers, as

Cleveland Eneas points out in his book *Bain Town* (1976, which was a “famed dangerous” suburb of Nassau in the 1930s and is now a notorious ghetto community, the Bain Town male would stick up for himself and was a proud person who would defend his rights. This is an interesting declaration in a colonial environment where police were brought in from other Caribbean territories to be a buffer zone between the local blacks and the whites and browns.

The idea that one can move up in society based on educational attainment that was so prominent among the leaders of the 1950s and 1960s has all but disappeared. (A discussion of that topic is beyond the scope of this work, however, but only serves to underscore the shift that has occurred among the majority of black males). What is also informative from the group discussions is the perception that construction work is better than professional work. Perhaps this is because one needs little skilled preparation for it and can make between three and five hundred dollars cash a week, an amount seen as considerable when one is eighteen or nineteen years old. Unless one prepares oneself beyond the basic level, the salary does not increase as professionals' remuneration could. Further, day labourers' lack of formal employment means that they are without benefits when they are ill. As these males age, their position becomes less tenable and more tenuous. They also become less able to make the same kind of living they once did. The scenario is complicated, but also leads to increased male frustration, disillusionment and disenfranchisement. This kind of scenario is discussed in great detail in June Carbone and Naomi Cahn's "The End of Men or the Rebirth of Class" (2013).

As single-parent homes proliferate and the one parent is overwhelmed by her responsibility to provide for everyone in a shrinking economy, there is less parental involvement due to more hours spent on the job. Young men then look for acceptance and identification in groups where they can find it. Further, as society increasingly paints a picture of young, working-class, black males as violent, unwanted and dangerous, they retreat further on to the margins of mainstream society. Gangs and other youth groups provide them with a place

they feel welcome. These groups, as seen in numerous reports, give youth a feeling of family, acceptance and respect, which is usually unavailable to them at home. They seek this acceptance and sense of belonging to something that is bigger than just they themselves and so are easily brought into the fold. The fear and loathing of gangs is palpable in The Bahamas currently, as a report in the *Nassau Guardian* on 23 October substantiates.

The “War on the Streets” is evidence that “the chickens have come home to roost”, according to reformed gang leader Carlos Reid, who said that the crime wave sweeping New Providence is partly due to gang activity. “I can say now that there are four major gangs that have turned into enterprises, ... that would be One Order, M.A., Fire and Theft and Zoe Pound (Rolle 2013).

This is also borne out by international sources. The Bahamas government has been extremely slow to react to this violence. In fact, the authorities have chosen to argue that gangs do not pose a real threat in The Bahamas. Meanwhile, large numbers of socially frustrated and angry young men fight against each other in their neighbourhood, school, community, and work-based gangs. Carlos Reid and the above article go on to argue that the serious gangs sprang from youth gangs. The irony is, as Reid underscores, “In 1995, when we started our movement, ... not too many people took us seriously... Most of the major gangs are funded through the drug trade. They have moved from delinquent young people to people trying to make a buck” (Rolle 2013). Rolle also reports that “Last year May, two people were killed and six other [sic] injured as a result of a feud between rival gangs, which erupted in a shooting at a local night club.”

What becomes clear is that healthy masculinity is ultimately undermined by the social exclusion that so many youth experience and gangs offer them a way to feel more empowered, as does subscribing to rap culture and becoming a part of the bling generation. Many young men feel that their only way to succeed is to perform the same types of violence portrayed in films, videos and

in the news. This is actually their attempt to claim fame. They are unable to access wealth through employment success, unless they work in the service industry, where many of them do work as jet ski operators, but continue to offer other services as well as a way to buttress their limited income. As seen in the section on education, according to Fielding, gang involvement was another sure sign that educational attainment was not valued. Gang members were far less likely to pursue an education. What should be studied is the link between this and social class. While the lower socio-economic group is influenced by the pull of popular culture, they are also being shown those men who are supposed to be role models acting in disregard of all rules of ethical public behaviour.

The tycoon's case further illustrates the complications between young, working-class men, the power structure that surrounds them, and hook's "*imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchy*" (hooks 2013, 4). Candia Dames states as follows:

The perceptions created by *Nygard Takes Back The Bahamas* video, his flamboyant frolicking with government ministers, and his hero's welcome in Grand Bahama... renewed debate on money in politics. The controversial video was one of several which made the rounds on social media last week. The video showed Nygard celebrating the Progressive Liberal Party's 2012 general election win while watching Prime Minister Perry Christie's victory rally address. Nygard proclaimed as he watched "Yes. We got our country back". Later in the eight-minute video, a group of new cabinet ministers is shown at Nygard's cay for a meeting with Nygard. Some of the ministers involved have branded the visit as casual (Dames, 2013)

Dames' story is disturbing not only in its focus on what this tycoon has done, but also on what she does not underscore, or the undergirding problems and inequalities mentioned above. In the Dames' story one of the ministers claims, "Mr. Nygard is a Bahamian ... He is a philanthropist and he has given more to this country than many other Bahamians including those who criticize

him" (Dames 2013).

The tycoon himself claims that "I have been dedicated to this country more than any single person in the whole country. There's testimonial after testimonial". This does not bode well in such an environment. It underscores his arrogance, as well as the *"imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchy"*. It seems to render everyone else with less money less than full citizens. This once again re-inscribes the messages youth are faced with daily. Said tycoon can act in an illegal manner as Hartnel indicates in "Government Proposed 21-Year Lease Of Reclaimed Crown Land To Peter Nygard", and be empowered for it. He can illegally acquire land and then be rewarded for the same with the lease to that land (Dames 2013, Hartnell 2013, Virgil 2013). He can damage the natural environment, but not be sanctioned for it. The debate is long, but because of his wealth and political clout, he seems immune to prosecution or control. His brand of masculinity raises the question, why should the youth see themselves as being able to progress through legitimate means? He shows them that bad behaviour is rewarded.

Overall, the problems presented here underscore the need to reassess how young men see themselves. Their self-image is predicated on exposure to a limited set of values due in part to a break down in responsible male participants in their lives, damaged family relations, popular culture, political life and local models of male behaviour which only serve to reinforce those presented by the media in *Shotas*, for example. The sad reality is that young, working-class, black youth have very few options from which to choose and even fewer that they see as being accessible to them. Given the low value placed on education for young men, they are disinclined to pursue an education. Social class impinges enormously on what images they see as accessible to them. Ironically, as Ian Strachan highlights in his *I's Man*, officialdom does nothing to improve the ways men see themselves. They are corrupt and ensure that corruption continues by the public nature of their misbehaviour as seen in "Nygard takes back The Bahamas". Taken in tandem, the messages from popular culture and lived

experiences are overwhelmingly negative and only reinforce the fragility of black masculinities, especially among the working class. A work like *This is How You Lose Her* promotes a damaged concept of masculinity and works along with aspects of popular culture like rap music to increase youth exposure to misogyny much like the aspects bell hooks challenges and many leaders in the region seem to perform. Gender transformation is denied by popular culture, cultural understandings of masculinity and the behaviour of many powerful men working to simply re-inscribe the old stereotypes of acceptable male behaviour as patriarchal, misogynist and demeaning to women, and to men who are perceived as weaker, and produces more social exclusion of young, black working class males.

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Jamaican Males' Readings of Masculinities and the Relationship to Violence

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Abstract

Within a context in which violence seems to be one of the consequences of the violation of heterosexual masculine norms, this paper explores how young Black men between the ages of 18 and 24 residing in urban (Kingston) and rural (St. Mary) Jamaica come to experience, understand, and perform masculinity. Drawing on focus group interviews conducted in Jamaica in the summer of 2013, the study unearths the complexities involved in negotiating masculinities within a Jamaican context across differences of class, education and geographic locations. In relating their experiences, urban and rural youth participants agreed on the critical role of fathers as role models and breadwinners. They were also united in their critique of homosexuality and its transgression of "appropriate" gender behaviour. Perhaps most revealing of the study's findings, however, was the degree of fear of violence that rural youth experienced, contesting the commonly held belief that violence is less endemic in rural communities. This fear was reflected in rural youth's greater ambivalence

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about, and unwillingness to, engage the image of the “bad man,” as well as a greater sense of pessimism about their life chances. Urban youth were more likely to see themselves as role models, mentors and change agents and believed that a greater investment in education was critical to their success.

Key words: Masculinity, violence, Jamaica, youth, manhood, homophobia

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Using data collected in the summer of 2013, this article seeks to understand Jamaican youth's perceptions, understandings and performances of masculinity and their relationship to violence. The young men who participated in the study were between the ages of 18 and 24 and resided in urban (Kingston) and rural (St. Mary) Jamaica. The focus groups on which the article draws were part of a larger cross-national study—"Youth and Community Development in Canada and Jamaica: A Transnational Approach to Youth Violence"¹—that sought to compare Black Canadian and Jamaican youth's experiences with violence in their respective nations and communities.² This article uses the data gathered in 2013 to explore the specific experiences of Black male youth within their Jamaican communities and explores the following questions: How do young Black men in Jamaica think about what it means to be a man in the context of persistent and escalating violence in the country? What are the differences and similarities in perceptions and experiences between urban and rural Jamaican males? What do they see as the roots of violence in Jamaica and how is that related to maleness? And what do the youth think needs to be done to address the issues and circumstances that lead to violence?

The interviews for this paper were conducted at a time when news about the murder of a sixteen-year-old transgender youth in Montego Bay, Jamaica, was capturing headlines in the island nation and around the world. In Canada, on August 11, 2013, both the *Toronto Star* and the *Globe and Mail* published articles about the murder, with the headline of the former claiming, "Homophobia a way of life in Jamaica." Similarly in the United States, *The New York Post* referred to the incident as evidence of the "nation's 'rabid homophobia'" (Quinn 2013). These international news reports and *Time* magazine's earlier branding (Padgett 2006) of Jamaica as "the most homophobic place on earth" appear to be premised on a viewpoint that the violence in Jamaica related to homophobia is really a reflection of a "normative" masculinity that is framed by assumptions of hyper-aggression and hyper-sexuality (Davis 2006).

Generally speaking, violence in post-independence Jamaica has been a major concern for many decades and has in some respects continued to escalate since 2000. The homicide rates, for example, increased from 33/100,000 in 2000 to a high of 64/100,000 in 2005; the rate was 45/100,000 in 2013, with most of the victims being males between the ages of 15 and 29 (Gayle 2014). According to Gayle, whereas in most societies a high level of violence tends to be a temporary phenomenon, in Jamaica it has been prolonged and has become part of the fabric of society so that Jamaicans have, in fact, adjusted “to living with [it].”³ In addition, Gayle (see, also, Levy 2012) notes that violence is so prevalent in some communities that youth are forced to associate with gangs for protection, inspiration and resources (that is, to provide funds for their hungry families). Furthermore, because of governments’ reactive approach to addressing or reducing violence in Jamaican communities, there are no long-term strategies. This is not to say that community violence goes unaddressed. The Peace Management Initiative and other organizations have been working to, as Levy (2012) explains, “head off and reduce community violence.”

It is within this context of a collective and national awareness of and concern about the effects of violence that this paper explores young men’s concept of their circumstances — social, familial, emotional and economic — in relation to violence, as well as the insights they offer for addressing their specific situations. In relating their experiences, Black Jamaican youth identified several critical factors — absent fathers, a lack of role models, hopelessness and fear — as playing a role in their construction of masculinity/ies and their engagement in or response to violence. In identifying solutions, the youth offered themselves as role models, mentors and change agents, with most of them believing that a greater investment in education was critical to their future success.

Theoretical Considerations

How men and boys live their lives and understand their gendered roles depends on the messages communicated to them about their positions in their local communities, as well as in their societies and the world. In other words, what they learn about masculinity — that is, the “appropriate” or “acceptable” ways of being a man — is embedded in the historical, political and social circumstances in which they grow up and live. Critical Masculinity Studies, which evolved from feminist theory in the 1980s, proffer that masculinities are social constructs that are framed, produced, reproduced and maintained by social, cultural, religious, educational, economic, and political (or governmental) institutions (Schrock and Schwalbe 2009). According to this theory, the performance of masculinities (individuals can, and often do, display different or multiple masculinities) comes from what one learns, or the roles into which one is socialized through these institutions, with the family having a primary *starting* role. As such, masculinities are diverse, complex and related to the social and cultural contexts through which males traverse and negotiate their sense of identities, self-worth, belonging and possibilities. Essentially, masculinities are dynamic processes that are mediated through social relations (Totten 2003). As Connell and Messerschmidt (2005, 836) contend, “Masculinity is not a fixed entity embedded in the body or personality traits of individuals. Masculinities are configurations of practice that are accomplished in social action and, therefore, can differ according to the gender relations in a particular social setting.”

In his work on masculinity, Connell (2005) also differentiates between hegemonic and subordinate masculinities. Hegemonic masculinities refer to the dominant social position of men over women and other men who occupy subordinate positions in the gendered and classed hierarchy of the patriarchal system in which a particular cultural definition of manhood is being produced, maintained and practiced throughout the life cycle. “Men can adopt hegemonic masculinity when it is desirable,” write Connell and Messerschmidt

(2005, 841), “but the same men can distance themselves strategically from hegemonic masculinity at other moments. Consequently, ‘masculinity’ represents not a certain type of man but, rather, a way that men position themselves through discursive practices.” Subordinated masculinities exist in relation to the specific location of the group (that is, working-class men, rural men, Black and dark-skinned men, effeminate men, non-gender conforming men, gays, etc.) and in relation to the model of hegemonic masculinity—an ideal or “cultural prototype” to which many males aspire but only few manage to embody (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Groes-Green 2009). Notwithstanding the expectations, regulations and limitations placed on males, the gendered hierarchy of their patriarchal societies affords them power and privilege. Within a Jamaican context, this power might be further negotiated in relation to class, race, skin color and area of residence (rural or urban).

To the extent that “manhood is demonstrated for other men’s approval,” (Kimmel 1994, 128) males’ performances of their masculine gender roles also tend to be heightened when they are in the company of their male peers. In these instances, males reject performances that might make them appear feminine, weak or unmanly. And since patriarchy, sexism and homophobia operate in tandem to frame males’ performances of their heterosexual hegemonic masculinities, they will make every attempt to avoid labels such as “fag” or “sissy,” since these perceived socially derogatory terms mark them as “failed males” (Thorne 1993, 115)⁴. So while children and youth, especially those in subordinated positions (in relation to class and/or sexuality), might contest the values, norms and practices of hegemonic masculinity as they mature, they are also pressured — indeed policed — to ultimately adhere and conform to what they have inherited as “legitimate” or honored ways of being “real” men. According to Gerke (2014, 23), “For boys, this means learning to develop what might be called a male habitus and to—quite literally—embody certain features of hegemonic masculinity,” knowing that bodily features such as height, physical strength, hairstyle, clothes and even the way one moves influence the gendered lens of the binary social system through which one is

evaluated or judged. Since masculinity is, therefore, a “process of endless becoming” (Gerke 2014), it is something to be worked at and proved throughout one's lifetime.

Applying Connell's theorization to the construction and performance of masculinity within the specific context of Caribbean “macho” culture, Crichlow (2014, 31) further explains:

For most young men in the Caribbean, the success and strength of their manhood to a large degree depends on how well they can perform “normative, straightjacket or dominant masculinity” to obfuscate any form of tenderness or effeminacy. Their hypermasculinity is an apparatus or sum total of collective surveillance and regulation of what is supposed to be male . . . To that end, most men police and deny expressions of tenderness in order to perform, instead, a certain cheerful obsequiousness, hypermasculinity and, by extension, heterosexualization.

This concept of an imposed, restrictive and scrutinized masculinity highlights the contradictory positions of social compliance and threat that Caribbean men are expected to embody and seamlessly navigate.

In reflecting on the performances of Jamaican and other Caribbean masculinities in Toronto, Andrea Davis in her essay, “Translating Narratives of Masculinity across Borders: A Jamaican Case Study,” argues that the masculinities of Jamaican males must be understood in particular cultural terms. She challenges, like Crichlow, the uncritical “assumption of Jamaican masculinity as an over-valorization of physical strength and heterosexual normativity that often leads to expressions of violence against men and women,” and argues that “this tendency toward hyper-masculinity needs to be thoughtfully reexamined and re-contested” (Davis 2006, 24). While Chevannes (2001), Parry (1996), and Gayle (2014) claim that the heterosexual imperative operates to define manhood among Jamaican males, Davis insists on the role

that homosexuality plays in shaping Jamaican national and cultural identity:

...within Jamaican society the clearest embodiment of the difference that “corrupts” and “contaminates” national identity is the homosexual. Seen as antithetical to national development and disruptive of social harmony, the homosexual is seen as an accepted sign of external, western corruption—a result of Babylon’s moral decay and degeneracy (Davis 2006, 25).

With reference to the Canadian context, James (2009, 61) challenges the hegemonic structure of the normalized white male heterosexual masculinity into which Black males are being socialized and are expected or forced to fit. Often premised on this discourse is the “common sense” notion that the plight of young Black men is rooted in the absence of Black male father figures and role models and mentors who can teach them how to be men and how to take advantage of the opportunities and possibilities in their societies (James 2012, 77). The promotion of role modeling and mentorship as a solution to the challenges faced by young Black men is a manifestation of liberalist individualism that places responsibility on the shoulders of youth, parents and communities rather than addressing the social and historical contexts in which these young men live. It is an approach that fails to take into account the legacy of colonialism, which “operates to obscure the obvious systemic or structural impediments facing young men and their parents, thereby leaving the status quo intact” (James 2012, 81).

Messerschmidt also suggests that there is a link between performances of hegemonic masculinities and violence. Masculinities, he argues, are dynamic social constructs that all exist in relation to hegemonic masculinities, which are premised on certain heterosexual norms: “competitive individualism, aggression and capacity for violence” (Messerschmidt 2000, 10). He continues to make the following point:

Because of its connection to hegemonic masculinity, for many men

violence serves as a suitable resource for constructing masculinity. That is, individuals who occasionally turn to violence as a masculine resource have come to accept the hegemonic masculine notion of aggressiveness and capacity for violence. This acceptance of violence as a means of doing masculinity effectively predisposes such individuals toward violence, providing a resource for affirming a particular type of masculinity. (Messerschmidt 2000, 12)

In his ethnographic study of “violent practices among disenfranchised young men” in Maputo, Mozambique, Groes-Green (2009, 286) found that “massive unemployment caused by neo-liberal reforms” led a growing number of young men to base their sense of authority (vis-à-vis women) on their physical prowess “rather than on economic powers and social status.” So while “young men from the city’s growing middle class” were able to enact hegemonic masculinities — given the “breadwinner ideology” of the society — poor young men reacted to the “situation of unemployment and poverty by enacting masculinities that are subordinate vis-à-vis middle class peers, but which [found] expression through violence or sexual performance . . .” (see also Crichlow 2014). Using these various understandings of multiple and fluid masculinities, constructed both in compliance with and in defiance of social regulatory “norms,” this paper seeks to demarcate Black Jamaican male youth’s specific negotiation of their roles as emerging males within their communities and the country as a whole.

Focus Groups: Participants and Process

It has been well established that focus group interviews are among the most productive methods of conducting research with young people. They help researchers better understand youth’s social worlds and experiences, and potentially offer a higher degree of immersion into the social worlds of participants than the standard interview format. Michel (1999, 36) has found, for example, that the use of focus groups is a “rich and productive way of gaining access to well-rehearsed ‘public knowledge’ and highlighting the way in which

social exchange reinforces such hierarchies.” As Hughes and DuMont (1993, 776-777) also indicate, focus groups allow researchers to “explore the nuances of attitudes and experiences [and] observe the dynamic nature of the social interactions between participants,” by operating as a combination of interviews and participant observations. Participants in this study brought to the interview process common, yet varied, experiences of their social and cultural worlds, and ways of understanding the issues under consideration — so much so that they were often able to complete each other’s sentences; as such, it was important for us to capture their different and diverse experiences, ideas and meaning making.⁵

Although as researchers we could be identified as Black, Jamaican or Caribbean, the fact that we were coming from Canada and were conducting research that was funded by a major Canadian granting agency potentially posed a challenge around issues of trust. Differences in age, geographic, cultural and class locations could have potentially affected our ability to gather data, as well as the reliability of the data gathered. As a consequence, we spent time in the first two years of the project establishing trust with Jamaican community organizations and research colleagues at the University of the West Indies, Mona, with whom we collaborated. The community organizations were responsible for recruiting focus group members, as well as organizing and co-facilitating the focus group sessions. Youth participated actively in all discussions and, as far as we could determine, offered responses that were honest and representative of their specific experiences.

A total of 32 Black males between the ages of 18 and 24 participated in three focus groups conducted in August 2013: two in Kingston, in which 12 and 10 males, respectively, participated; and one in St. Mary, in which 10 males participated.⁶ All participants, as explained above, were recruited through youth organizations in their respective communities. In Kingston, participants came to the University of the West Indies (Mona campus) accompanied by their youth leaders. Two sessions conducted by James were held concurrently with

males and females in adjoining student lounges on the university campus, while the other youth visited various sites on the campus. The St. Mary sessions were held in adjoining rooms at a local community center.

Each session took ninety minutes and began with questions to participants about their general perception and opinions of violence in their respective communities and the country generally. They were specifically asked to describe their experiences — if any — with violence. In these discussions, the youth identified those most likely to be the perpetrators of violence, the people in their communities who were most affected by violence, and their own roles and responsibilities either as perpetrators or as individuals attempting to address violence. As we talked, they repeatedly referenced what was at stake for them in becoming men. This was further encouraged by questions specifically meant to tease out their understanding of the construction of masculinity and how this related to them. Some of these questions were: What does masculinity mean to you? How do young men like you understand masculinity? How do you practice it? And, what does it mean for you to be a man growing up in Jamaica? The social context of the focus groups provided us as researchers and facilitators (again given that we were “outsiders” from Canada) the opportunity not only to obtain answers to questions like these, but also to observe the social dynamics of peer group interactions, as well as gain insight into the “gestural” and “visual” aspects of their lives (Wacquant 2004, 100).

Social and Cultural Context: “Fatherlessness” and the Role of Family

Seemingly well-schooled in the hegemonic notion of fathers as essential role models and the parent best able to socialize sons into the values, norms, customs and behaviors of masculinity, urban and rural youth who participated in the research maintained that the absence of a father or fatherlessness played a major contributing role in the difficult familial, social and financial situations in which they found themselves and were forced to navigate. They claimed that

fathers were important “role models” and that the absence of a father meant that they were missing the critical support of the most significant person from whom they could learn about life. As one young man declared, “Young men like we now, we need man-to-man talk.”

Conversely, youth also cited the limitations of the mother-son relationship: “Say you have a man and woman problem, it looks weird to go to your mother with that. You want to talk to your father more, but him no deh-deh.” They firmly believed that “you can’t say, have the mother alone. Get it! Father and mother have to come together... The father’s supposed to show him support.” When asked if they thought they would be better off if their fathers were around, members of both urban and rural communities responded with a resounding “yes.” Physical absence was not, however, the only problem they identified in their critique of their relationships with their fathers. Some youth also insisted on the need for emotional connection. As one of the participants stated, “Sometimes, your father is around, but he nah show you no attention.” When asked if they were missing that father figure, the response was “Yeah, a lot.”

Interestingly, while youth did admit to the limitations of fathers in their roles as engaged parents and role models, they nevertheless held on to the idea that fathers are the *moral architects* to whom they must look, and on whom they must rely to learn how to live as males in their society. That youth held on to this claim despite having done well in living out their maleness with single mothers (see James 2009; Tavares-Carter 2009) was further reflective of their belief in the hegemonic idealized malecentric notion of the supremacy of males, and the neoliberal ethos of individualism and personal or familial responsibility that sustains it. The irony these youth failed to recognize was that their fatherless situation was in large part a product of the very patriarchal practices of hegemonic masculinity by which they were striving to live. For example, Jamaican men have greater access than women to the privilege afforded by mobility (being able to leave home without question or societal sanctions) which helps to sustain fatherlessness. While male privilege is affected by class, men of

marginalized status (such as poor or rural men) also benefit from the privilege of mobility even if this privilege is not comparable to that enjoyed by middle-class men who can better perform the kind of hegemonic masculinity seen as a normative and acceptable "ideal" in a society that supports gender hierarchy (see Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Groes-Green 2009).

These participants from both urban and rural areas appeared to live by what Groes-Green (2009) refers to as the "breadwinner ideology," in that they believed that men bore the responsibility of supporting their families financially and emotionally and ensuring that all family members have the best quality of life. Participants reasoned that with inadequate parental role models, young men would inevitably resort to a life of crime for the sake of their own survival, and more especially to provide food for "their hungry mother and siblings — and possibly friends" (also, see Gayle 2014). As one participant suggested, if their "father can't get a job... now he broke, broke, broke. He can't pay the bills, so you turn a criminal." But even as they complained about the physical and/or psychological "absent presence" of "failed" fathers and were adamant that crime as an alternative means of obtaining financial support for the family was destructive, they accepted without question the hegemonic ideal of masculinity that demands the performance of the breadwinner role to which they aspired.

Along with their experiences of "fatherlessness" and single mothering, youth also struggled with other aspects of their evolving perception of Jamaican men and their own relationship to women. Some youth suggested, for example, that the failure of fathers to be present and provide for them was often caused by these men's involvement with women other than their mothers. They were particularly resentful of women whom they suspected were receiving financial or emotional support from their fathers, since these resources could have been used to support them. A hypothetical case offered to illustrate this was of a boy who might meet his father on the road with a woman, ask his father for money and be refused: "... Him [father] say, him bruck (have no money). How would that make you feel?" In this scenario, the woman is

constructed as a seductress who lures potentially good men away from their families and their parental responsibilities. Similarly, these youth seem to assume that fathers play only a minor role in such situations and again fail to see themselves and their fathers as casualties of the very male role they are striving to uphold.

These male youth also identified that in some instances when fathers left their families, mothers displayed various degrees of anger and guilt, which contributed to their sons' negative experiences of "fatherlessness." On this point, one participant invited us to consider the case in which a mother—expected to take on both the nurturing role of mother and the economic role of father—is unable to cope emotionally and, thus, projects her frustration on to her son:

The mother is left to be the father. Out of anger and out of guilt, she might say, "You not going to be nothin'; you go be just like your poppa." Yeah, it's true, and some young men who are not strong enough will internalize this and eventually you start seeing yourself as inferior and marginalized.

The youth's analysis of the mother's failure in this instance not only troubles the commonly held idea that boys romanticize mothers who raise them without fathers, but also reveals the complexity involved in negotiating these gendered familial relationships.

In extending the discussion of "fatherlessness," Kingston youth with some post-secondary education commented more directly on its relationship to their socialization as young men. They argued that young men like themselves were not being "properly" socialized due to the absence of fathers, some of who migrate "overseas and leave their families behind." They went on to link the father's absence to a desire for alternative models of manhood and the propensity toward violence this may encourage among some youth. As a consequence of the absent father, they proffered, boys are encouraged to look elsewhere for support and role models, most often to community or area

"dons"⁷ whose appeal is largely based on their perceived social power and lavish lifestyles. One Kingston youth expressed the implication of the absent father and the need for role models in the following way:

[We are] not being socialized properly because, growing up ... if the father in the home is missing, the next best is to look into the community for the male figures to be role models. The chances are, the next best male figure in the community is the don. The don has power through money because of his violent behavior and stuff like that. He is now living a lavish lifestyle, so as a youth, not seeing your father, and you look and you find the don, you say all right. You know, I want to grow up and live like him because the don ah drive the big car. The don have the whole heap of woman dem. The don have the money and the big house.

Another youth commented more directly on the complex dual role of the don as both protector and enforcer: "They are really community police and any time badness ah gwan, a badness against a next community. That is one of the trends we see in the whole donmanship... It helps to keep order"⁸. This understanding of masculinity as complex interplay between power and paternalism, abuse and empathy, demonstrates some of the complexities involved in understanding how Jamaican boys and men perceive themselves in relation to those around them and within the specific socio-economic contexts in which they live.

In contrast to dons, who in some instances might be considered to embody "oppositional masculinity" (see Messerschmidt 2000), participants also discussed the role of male elders who they insisted had less positive influence in their communities:

The elders, as in the older men in the community, have nothing to do. They have no work to do, and they are smoking, cursing bad words... gambling, and the younger ones now see them and take it upon themselves to follow them, to start gambling... They are following them in a negative way.

Members of government and the justice system — law enforcers especially — were also summarily dismissed on the basis that they lacked the moral integrity to be role models and community leaders. The government was perceived to be corrupt, and police officers were thought to be unqualified and unable to protect young people and/or maintain law and order in poor communities, something that gang leaders or dons had stepped in to do (see Levy 2012). Speaking of the police, one youth declared: “The police dem certified to fight crime or whatever they supposed to do, but the police and other people on the street know wha ah gwan.” Another participant further claimed that the police would “lock we up, 'cause dem a feel say we are little boy with nothin' fi go do.” In this context in which youth felt that their age and social class combined to make them vulnerable to attack from the police, it is understandable that many of them would have very little respect for the police, and hence would dismiss the advice they received from police as hypocritical.

Emotional Impact of Violence and Coping Strategies

One of the most revealing components of our conversation with participants was about their coping strategies. Particularly poignant were rural youth's accounts of their fear of violence and the strategies of avoidance they subsequently employed. One strategy they routinely used was that of not attending school in adjacent communities where they experienced violence. In addition, on occasions when they directly encountered aggressive and/or violent situations they protected themselves by running away. When they were unable to escape, they explained that the safest response was to concede to their aggressors' demands, which they did out of fear of not only being beaten

or robbed, but possibly even killed. Below is an exchange with rural youth that describes quite powerfully the many ways in which violence might be initiated and the self-protection strategies, such as avoidance and compliance, they are forced to employ:

Participant 1: Yeah, dem things made me 'fraid to go school man . . . Me is a man. Me can't take the talking you know. Me will take a big stone, and [then] as they say, the war will start. And they will chop up, and stab up, and dat me ah go run from. The killing and the violence, me just avoid them cause me afraid fe it.

Facilitator: Would you say that all you guys are very afraid then? *Participants* (about 4 of 6): Yes.

Participant 2: Everybody has a fear inside of them, fear of everything. So right now people will just take up a gun to protect themselves as well or just to protect their family. That's why lots of guns are in here and it turning out to be crime and pure killing and everything.

Participant 1: If you even bounce on a man... he want to kill you... If you look on a man too hard he want to kill you...

Participant 3: If you step on a man toe he want to go to war... ask you what you ah do...

Participant 2: Majority of the time in school, we ah go walk out because me no wan' fight. Me just walk out because badness don't pay... badness nah pay.

Participant 1: This is the case, I am saying that if you really stand up and talk nice and agree to what they say... they might leave you standing alive, but if you give them talk, when you no give dem what they want, they go shoot you...

The rural youth participating in the study, thus challenged the perception that they were more protected from violence because they resided in small villages. They not only recounted their experiences with violence, but they also expressed a greater degree of fear of violence than urban youth did. The fact that urban youth did not discuss their fear of violence does not, however, deny the harsh realities of violence many of them face on a daily basis.

The urban youth employed similar and other coping strategies. In addition to walking away or running from violent situations, they employed other covert strategies of avoidance, such as pretending not to see or hear violence. One youth described this as the ability to perform “coolness”: “We have a culture to just stay cool, a stay cool culture. That’s our culture. You see something ah gwan and you...keep your cool.” The ability to stay cool was not merely a performance of masculinity, but was linked self-consciously to a dual strategy of avoidance and protection. One participant explained this best by evoking a local Jamaican saying to comment on what was at stake if one did otherwise: “See and blind; hear and dead.”⁹ And, in words that revealed the irony of their participation in our research, one youth further declared: “We have this thing in Jamaica where we never see violence. So if you ask the questions a hundred times, I doubt you go get one of us here who will say we have seen violence because we never see violence.”

Participants also identified the ways in which inadequate levels of education might be linked to decreased self-confidence and may encourage participation in violence. For instance, many of the participants — especially those living in rural areas — pointed out that in families where “parents cannot afford to send [them] to school,” children grow up lacking education. The effect of this limitation was further identified by urban youth, not so much in economic terms, but in terms of leadership and self-confidence: “It is through educating someone that

you uplift his or her consciousness and thinking," thereby providing him with the ability to "reason" with the "bad man" about his "violent behavior." Participants insisted, therefore, that education provides youth with the ability to change their circumstances on a number of levels: not only economically and socially, but also emotionally and psychologically. And, as if to remind us of the colonial legacy of Jamaica's education system (James 2013), one Kingston youth explained: "The inner city is a good place to live. The only problem is we are not trained sufficiently in dispute resolution and stuff like that."

The youth in Kingston also believed that many of their peers in urban communities had become desensitized to violence because of their over-exposure to violence through the media and in their everyday encounters—encounters that often traumatized them. The following is one example of a young man who had seen someone murdered: Seeing someone get shot in front of you is completely different (than on the media). It jerks you up a whole heap, whole heap . . . Let me tell you, the night I went home after that, every time me close mi eyes, me see the man brains come out. Me couldn't sleep. Me couldn't even function in school. Me couldn't even function in training.

This sense of recurring trauma was linked to a ubiquitous sense of pessimism and hopelessness among both urban and rural youth. One youth described the pessimism among community peers: "We talked about Jamaica and the violence, and we tried to find a solution. People were, like, it's not going to change and not going to be sunny. Well, the system's corrupt." Another participant, in a critical intervention, offered a sarcastic commentary on the role of "culture":

I think the problem with Jamaican people on the whole is that they too lazy. They want ready done, and they make it

easy for somebody to manipulate and use them. They will always be oppressed and suppressed until they change and get over this stupid culture of being lazy and want ready done things.

In responding to the overarching sense of pessimism among youth, this participant suggested that the youth's ability to change their circumstances might depend on their own ability to craft strategic personal and psychological responses that could empower them to take ownership of and responsibility for their futures.

Other participants responded to criticisms of their perceived passivity or "laziness" by theorizing that the causes of violence in the country were complex and had to do with a lack of economic resources and jobs, political party tactics, and young people's evolving sense of how to live as men in their communities. "In town now," as one Kingston youth proffered, the "majority of the youth violence is related to political or gang violence [and] senseless killing to see who is the baddest." Relating the actions of youth to government's lack of commitment to helping them, another participant interjected:

It's the will-power [of the government]. If you have a country and you are not providing sufficient resources and jobs for young people coming up, they are going to turn to something else. Nuff young people no want to sit around and laze about.

The youth also measured their own sense of power or powerlessness in relation to the wider power structure within the society and discussed how this might influence their responses to violence. They indicated that they had little to no faith or "trust in the justice system," and that police officers did not have the ability or skills to address the violence in their communities. Some even attributed the rise in violence directly to the

incompetence of police officers whose inability or refusal to apprehend criminals fuels offenders' sense of power "because of their money and influence." As a result, criminals come to believe that they are "untouchable" and can escape the system and so continue their violent activities. This situation, some urban participants argued, contributed to many youth having "no sense of consciousness as to the consequences of their actions." In this regard, many urban youth observed, a culture of retributive violence that was due in part to familial kinships and a strong sense of community alliances drove some individuals to take matters into their own hands. In the words of one participant: "If a man kill mi brother; definitely know the law can't tell me, me nah fi go fi him..."

Constructs of Masculinities

Participants articulated constructs of masculinity in relation to "badness," "toughness," "aggression" and leadership — all of which were fueled by social expectations. However, there were notable differences between rural and urban participants' understanding of themselves as men. While insisting that they understood the need to live up to the "tough" guy image, rural youth were more reticent and ambivalent about doing so. They tended to have a fight or flee mindset, in that they were willing to fight and be aggressive when necessary, but only if the odds were not overwhelmingly against them. As one youth put it, "Run, run... if me alone." This is contrary, they admitted, to the romanticized notion of male's infallibility as evidenced by the considerable laughter in response to one youth's statement: "a man supposed to be tough and capable of withstanding a gunshot." In fact, as Crichlow (2014, 31) writes, the dominant culture of the Caribbean "demands physical responses from boys and makes toughness the hallmark of the real male."

The urban youth, on the other hand, understood aggression as a means of garnering respect. According to one participant, "if you're not aggressive, if

you're not dominant, and you're not demanding respect from others, then persons don't respect you. Then you are not a man." Another youth suggested that failing to earn respect could, in fact, precipitate violence

...fueled by the misconception of masculinity, of who a man is... If you disrespect me in front of him [referring to a group member], me ah go feel a way [i.e. offended], 'cause him ah go say, him just dis me, so me ah no big man... So it's always a power struggle to show who is more manly than who.

In reinforcing this point, another youth added the following:

You know say that him not hundred per cent man, cause me can dis him certain way. He is going to go on the defensive now and say, alright, me have to prove say me a man.' And proving that you are a man... mean that you have to be violent. You can't portray your point in an intellectual way. If you nah dis a man, chop a man, shot a man, you not a bad man. So then it goes back to the power struggle... to maintain and fuel [your] masculinity and self-worth.

While all the urban youth agreed that this kind of demand for respect is based on "ignorance," they held that some youth felt they had no alternatives, an attitude made worse by the fact that "the only thing some youths like us believe is dat badness is wha dem a carry on the forehead to make everybody know they are bad man, so therefore they use it." This claim is consistent with Kimmel's (1994) argument that young men's performance of manhood is, in large part, to gain recognition and acceptance from peers.

University-educated urban participants, on the other hand, tended to identify leadership as a fundamental aspect of their own identification as males. Essentially, they saw themselves as leaders, future leaders, or individuals who can drive social change. In this regard, they identified two types of leaders: the first represented a form of dictatorship personified by dons, and the second

represented “the full dynamics of” masculinity as seen in someone who influences, helps and motivates others. In the words of one participant, “For me being a man you have to be a leader not a follower. You have to be responsible, guide your own way, make your own path.” And ever conscious of the influence of dons on many youth, another participant added:

I must be a leader, so if the don... tell me to do this; tell me to do that; that is going to affect my masculinity... I-man going to say alright me ah go lead you now. And now you have fi start put in him consciousness that you are a leader too.

Ultimately, dominance remained an important component of both types of leadership.

For many of these youth, the performance of masculinity also meant dressing and carrying themselves according to particular social and cultural norms. In an indirect reference to the recent murder of the transgender youth in Montego Bay, they argued that deviating from such norms — wearing clothing that might signal femininity, like dressing in “tights and high heels, and [having] weaves in his hair and [polished] finger nails” — was perceived as contrary to what it means to be a man and was, therefore, offensive. As one urban youth put it, “If you don’t dress a particular way, you are not a man.” So on the basis of dress and mannerisms alone, some males would be deemed to be homosexuals and transgressors of the social norm.

Rural youth were particularly adamant that “non-conforming males” (McCready 2010) should be gotten “rid of,” since “Jamaica hate, hate those nastiness.” For most urban and rural participants, homosexuality was, in fact, not only contrary to their understandings of masculinity, but was also contrary to biblical teachings and Jamaican national culture (see Crichlow 2014). These youth relied on their understanding of the Bible and its privileging of heteronormativity to support their claims:

Participant: The Bible tell you, you know, that if a man should lie down with another man he shall be put to death.

Participant: Even the Bible say two persons can't reproduce. Two males same sex, deh can't reproduce.

Kingston youth were equally adamant in their critique of homosexuality. They too believed that homosexuality was contrary to Jamaican cultural practice, identified it as a sin, and supported the claim that homosexuals deserved to be humiliated, ridiculed and punished. One youth referenced a scene he witnessed to illustrate the perceptions of and behavior toward gay men:

I see this man with his gun in a next man's mouth, saying, 'Suck it off,' laughing with his friends around him. Him tell de man say, 'suck off him gun'... Me nah go turn back, cause if you turn back, they go find you suspicious. . . At the end of the day the man never did. Me assume ah joke dem a make, cause him deh-deh, and his friend dem deh-deh; and everybody ah laugh wid the man wid the gun in his mouth. Nutting came out of it.

While this incident might have been a joke, or was framed as such, it represents the frightening treatment of those who are, or are suspected to be, homosexuals and the policing of sexuality.¹⁰

How do we explain these youth's uncompromising and conservative stance on homosexuality and their claims that it violates Jamaican cultural norms, codes and mores?¹¹ What accounts for the differences between urban and rural youth's negation of sexual diversity and "non-conforming gender expressions" (McCready 2010; see also Crichlow 2014)? It is likely that the attitudes of the participants have to do with a number of intersecting factors: their lack of exposure to diverse sexualities; the power and centrality of the church and religious elders in their communities; their level of education; and a

lack of socialization to question established "truths." Indeed, there are contradictions, complexities and fluidities at play in constructions of masculinity even within a Jamaican context and these must be understood within specific historical, social and cultural contexts.

For the most part, these young men believed that the construction of their masculinities cumulatively involved gaining respect and social credibility through struggles for power, assertions of dominance over others, ability to confront adversities and dangers, observations of "male" standards of dress and behavior, and effective negotiation of superior/subordinate relationships. The process of demanding respect and recognition was, in fact, believed to be a necessity in building and maintaining self-worth and confidence. As one Kingston youth stated, "My view is that being masculine, you dominate your social life... [and] you supposed to live up to the standard."

Approaches to Reducing Violence

Despite their expressions of hopelessness and fear, many of the youth — especially those from urban areas — were still confident that they could become agents of change and role models. This confidence in their ability to exercise agency was related to their belief in the value and power of education as a critical medium of building "self-esteem" and cultivating new social networks that could ensure not only a promising future for them and their peers, but also for Jamaican society as a whole. In their conversations, many of the youth reflected on their own educational attainment (a number of them were in university or aspired to attend university). According to one youth, "I think a greater level of education means lesser levels of violence." "People," another participant continued, "need to realize education is the only thing that can bring you further in life; you can't depend on the don or depend on somebody to provide you with money."

Many of the urban youth also believed that if they were to become change agents they would have to distance themselves from “bad company,” choosing instead to associate with more socially conscious, supportive and trustworthy people. “I distance myself” from the community, said one youth, “because me being there regular, [it] is going to influence me to do something that I don’t want to do. I find myself around [people] now who want to work for what they need; the legal way, right! I don’t linger around corners or alleys with bad men; dem ah preach gun and violence.” This participant, a law student, also went on to talk about what he had learned from his experiences of living in both “inner city” and “uptown” communities as a university student:

One other thing in terms of moving up the social ladder, as I have said before, I am able to compare living in an uptown community with very affluent people as opposed to living in the inner city. What you would realize, having come to university doing law school now, I am able to make a comparison or distinction between what happens in Jerk Lane and what happens uptown. The links you make, the networking, is what works for you. So at this point, I am able to call lawyers, doctors, politicians. I have all of them to call on... so you are able to move up. [When there is an opening for a job] the first person they will be able to call is you because you are in that circle.

It is not surprising that those youth in Kingston with postsecondary education perceived themselves to be role models and future leaders who would be able to drive social change. The following statement further encapsulates this sentiment:

I know I have the right and the freedom... to portray myself as a man to the society and the environment around me. [My status] now is like a hook: you throw it with bait to an impressionable young man, or a vulnerable young man, [who] will look around my

community now and say, "Chev live right here, and he carry himself a certain way. Chev deh a university now and do this and do that. I can be like Chev." I am now throwing myself out there indirectly to be a role model. Also [I demonstrate] how we are supposed to behave, to carry ourselves, what are the kinds of activities you have to be doing — not hanging out on the street doing things, not being idle and stuff like that...The second I become a role model, it will benefit at least one person, and that person in turn will do the same. And you know, you have a cycle and soon you will start seeing changes.

These youth's construction of themselves as leaders and potential leaders is again not surprising, given that leadership constitutes "a peculiar ideal for Jamaican hegemonic masculinity" (Shepherd 2007, 275). The fact that, in youth's discussion, this tendency toward leadership was clearly linked to education is also significant. According to Shepherd (2007), Jamaican boys' view of themselves as emerging men is not only shaped by their families and their peers, but also by school curricula, particularly history education. The curriculum, by "sending out clues about the preferred masculinity that young males should adopt," she argues, "contributes to the perpetuation of hegemonic masculinity," which has implications for national development (Shepherd 2007, 275-276). While youth's identification of their roles as leaders may be perceived as a positive strategy of change, this strategy itself does not challenge notions of "ideal" masculinity at play in Jamaican society, but rather builds on a sense of masculine power and self-confidence embedded in different social institutions and socially sanctioned by the middle and upper classes. Male leadership, therefore, appears to be a distinct class strategy more readily available to youth with greater access to education and social mobility. This may account for the greater level of optimism among the urban, university-educated youth as compared to the rural youth who participated in the study.

Sold on the neoliberal promise of education as an equalizer that enables social mobility, as well as being a means to promote a more socially and

politically conscious and responsible population, it is understandable that these “role models” and “change agents” will offer their own charges or mentees the same strategy of education that they see as their pathway to success. They indicated that they intended to offer education as the remedy for the ills that beset youth, their communities, and the society as a whole. As one youth illustrated, “So most of the time my brethren, me try to encourage him and say, ‘Go back to school to do something; me don’t like that thing de’ [not having completed school]. Because he don’t understand how he nah go get rich if he don’t go back to school to get his education.” Again, the assumption of wealth and middle-/upper-class status as essential to “ideal” masculinity went unchallenged and importantly framed youth’s developing sense of themselves in relation to the wider society.

These youth also insisted that they were not just about talk: they were about action. Ultimately, they and others must have a willingness to change their lives: “When it comes to action, people will always talk, you know. When it comes to action, you see me, it’s all about willingness. I take upon myself to try and influence persons in the right directions.”

When reflecting on what it would take for essential societal change, the participants were, however, cynical of the politicians and government—in short the political structures — that they saw as problematic. They seemed to believe that needed changes were a long way off or would never materialize. This was evidenced in the rhetorical question one Kingston youth simultaneously posed and answered:

Why don’t you get them people out of power?... Well someone else ah go take dem place... Nobody is willing to go there and be the change. That’s the whole problem. Everyone saying it nah go change, like there is no hope for the country. People need to get that idea out of them head.

In rejecting the source of change as something external to him, this youth, like his peers, prioritized his own agency as the most critical transformative influence he had over his individual life chances and something that he could also leverage to alter the social context in which he lived.

Conclusion

This paper has examined a group of Black Jamaican male youth's construction of their masculinities and the pressures they feel to live up to the masculine "norms" of their communities. The study revealed the many complexities involved in negotiating masculinities within a Jamaican context across boundaries of class, education and geographic locations. While urban and rural youth participants agreed on many critical aspects of their evolving understanding of themselves as men, there were also some striking differences. Youth unanimously agreed on the role of fathers as necessary role models and prioritized the male as breadwinner. They were also united in their critique of homosexuality, which for them ran counter to, and threatened, the heteronormative values enshrined within Jamaican practices of appropriate and accepted gender behavior.

Perhaps most revealing of the study's findings, however, was the degree of fear of violence that rural youth lived with, challenging the idea that violence is less pervasive in rural communities. This fear was further reflected in rural youth's greater ambivalence about and unwillingness to live up to the image of the "bad man," as well as a greater sense of pessimism about their life chances. While urban youth also struggled with some issues of fear that often encouraged strategies of silence, over-exposure to violence seemed to lead to greater desensitization. They were more likely to measure their masculinity, for example, in relation to dominant male figures in their communities, particularly dons. Urban youth with some post-secondary education, however, also saw themselves as role models and change agents and were more willing to

challenge existing hierarchies of male power, including dons, in order to articulate new spheres of male influence. While urban youth were able to describe more graphic experiences with violence than rural youth, encouraged by their belief in the power of education they seemed better able to articulate pathways to social change and individual and social transformation.

These findings across urban and rural communities — showing both similarities and differences — demonstrate the various ways in which Jamaican youth respond to the violence in their respective communities and the society generally. Their understandings of themselves as emerging men have to do with their complex and often shifting readings, enactments and/or performances of their masculinities, as well as the social, economic and political circumstances in which they find themselves. Participants' discussions of their experiences with violence, and of their resulting fears, revealed the deep emotional damage with which they lived on a daily basis. As males, who are socialized into physical and emotional toughness, they demonstrated that regardless of where they lived, they had little or no available resources for discussing or even admitting their vulnerabilities. It is in response to this growing need created by the emotional impact of violence on the wellbeing of Jamaican boys and men that this study seeks to make its contribution.

¹ This three-year partnership (March 2011–March 2014) brought together researchers from five Canadian universities and the University of the West Indies (Mona Campus), as well as youth and youth activists from community organizations in Canada and Jamaica. Andrea Davis was the partnership's principal investigator, and Carl James was responsible for the sociology and social work research cluster. The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) funded the project.

² The decision to study Black Jamaican youth is not a reflection of lack of awareness of the racial and ethnic complexity of Jamaican society, but was instead guided by the goals of the larger transnational partnership program in which we sought to respond to a public discourse in which violent crimes in Toronto, Canada, are not only portrayed in the media as constituting a Black youth crisis, but a "Jamaicanized" one (Davis 2014). By specifically examining and comparing Black youth's experiences with violence in Canada and Jamaica, the study has sought to determine both the extent to which young Black men's understanding of themselves in Toronto might be framed by uncritical assumptions of a perceived normative Jamaican hypermasculinity, and how a more accurate understanding of Jamaican society might help these youth disrupt stereotypes of blackness that circulate in large Canadian cities. The goal of the program was not to reproduce the Canadian tendency to reduce questions of Jamaicanness to *de facto* questions of blackness, but to use the data gathered to unearth the discrete experiences of Black male youth within their Jamaican communities.

³ Gayle (2014) also suggests that a call for a reduction in violence is usually "one of the most critical election demands," a period when there tends to be an increase in violence. Horace Levy (2012) suggests further that violence in Jamaica has long been part of political party rivalry, and that through the aid of garrisons, the upper classes — made up of "largely brown and white" people — "have used the Black poorer classes to win elections and maintain themselves in power."

⁴ Examples of hegemonic masculinities include "cool guys" and "jocks," while subordinated masculinities are read onto the bodies of those who are (or are perceived to be) gay, "wimps," or "nerds." Oppositional masculinities—that is, those who explicitly resist and challenge hegemonic forms of masculinity — are seen as freaks and [tough guys THIS IS CORRECT, I ASSUME?](Messerschmidt 2000, 10; see, also, Crichlow, 2014).

⁵ In fact, despite the homogeneity—in terms of gender, age, class, color, race, community — of the focus groups we conducted, we were conscious that any of these factors could have operated to bring about differences, marginalization and silences in the group (see Bischoping and Dykema 1999; Michel 1999). Fortunately, we do not believe that this happened in any of the focus groups.

⁶ A similar number of focus groups were conducted with female participants in both Kingston and St. Mary. However, these findings are not discussed in this paper.

⁷ A don is the leader of an urban garrison community who differs from a mere gangster by his uncontested power and wealth. In the dual role of protector/provider and fearsome gang leader, dons deploy their power both to protect their communities and repress their enemies and use their wealth to finance a local welfare system. They benefit from the organized support of their communities and well-established security structures, and often have deep political connections and protection (Charles 2002, 41).

⁸ In referring to the dominant, forceful and aggressive roles of dons in communities, one participant stated that they "demand respect" and they carry out their leadership role "with an iron fist... fueled by their ignorance and arrogance." Another added: "In the inner city, as dem [residents] love to use the word rifle. Dem men have rifle, you're a powerful man of the community, you know. This is your sense of power and authority. This is how you intimidate people; and this is how you crop your niche in the rest of the society. So in your little corner that is how you enforce your power and authority on the rest of the persons in the community; so of course they will be fearful of you."

⁹ Another participant went on to say that if someone tries to stop a crime by reporting it, violence would result.

¹⁰ What are also at play in this incident are the "risky" movements Jamaican men make across sexual boundaries even while being adamant about the "evils" of homosexuality. These movements or shifts toward a "feminized aesthetic" (Hope 2010) occur particularly within the cultural space of the dancehall where "the most hardened ghetto youth" might dress in effeminate pastel shades, sport intricate hairstyles and fashioned eyebrows, and have bleached skin (Hope 2010, 125).

¹¹ Again, we think here of those Jamaican men (outside of the dancehall) who regularly treat themselves to pedicures and skin bleaching — practices that have long been associated with females. How are we to understand their version of masculinity?

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"Pullin' Rank": School Violence and Neocolonial Hegemonic Masculinity

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Abstract

In my research on school violence at a secondary school in Trinidad, I found that students and school personnel spoke often of 'rank'. 'Pullin rank' is an emic term that refers to a hyper-exertion of authority and power, and as the name suggests, it refers to a social hierarchy. In this article, I employ this term as an explanatory framework for the various configurations of hegemonic masculinity that I documented during this qualitative research project. I discuss how masculinities intersect with school violence, not only among students and school personnel, but also on a structural level. By focusing on both direct/material and structural violence, my analysis reveals a spectrum of what I call 'masculinist posturing' that is in itself violent and perhaps contributory to violence. Masculinist posturing, as I employ it here, is qualified as both dispositional/behavioral and structural. I posit that the instances of direct/material violence I witnessed are influenced by and nestled within a wider web of structural violence; a structural violence that has a neocolonial character to it. Thus the term: neocolonial hegemonic masculinity. The data provided in this article have been sourced from observations, semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and classroom discussions conducted over a 7-month period in 2010, with a 3-week follow-up in 2013.

Key words: Authority, power, violence, neo-colonialism, Trinidad

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- Researcher: So what else causes violence in schools?
- Mark: Fame
- Researcher: Fame? What do you mean by that?
- Mark: ...people might want to show that they are really bad...and that they have **rank** so they just like beat up people to look for a fame. (Student Focus Group 5SG, June 16, 2010)
- Ms. Thierry: School violence ... at least in this school, is really each person's ignorance really of how they view things and it comes about as a result of that old thing called **rank**, you know? And a sense of masculinity ... who is more masculine than the other, more or less. That is concerning the boys really. (Teacher Interview, May 7, 2010)

In my research on school violence at a secondary school in Trinidad, I found that students and school personnel spoke often of 'rank'. 'Pullin rank' is an emic term that refers to a hyper-exertion of authority/power, and as the name suggests, it refers to a social hierarchy. In this article, I employ this term as an explanatory framework for the various configurations of hegemonic masculinity that I documented during this qualitative research project. It is my aim to discuss how masculinities intersect with school violence,¹ not only among students and school personnel, but also on a structural level. The data that inform this article on masculinities emerge from a larger data set I procured while researching school violence in Trinidad.

My interest in school violence aims to focus on both direct violence and structural violence². This dual focus reveals a spectrum of masculinist posturing that is in itself violent, and perhaps contributes to or perpetuates violence. Masculinist posturing, as I employ it here, is qualified as both dispositional/behavioral and structural. In my observations at my research site, I witnessed many instances of direct/material violence, a form of violence that is influenced

by and nestled within a wider web of structural violence; I posit that this structural violence has a neocolonial character to it.³

The Caribbean region, per capita, is considered one of the most violent areas of the world (UNDP 2012)⁴. Trinidad and Tobago (TT), despite its economic prowess and international status as a high income, non-OECD country, is also one of the Caribbean's leaders in terms of violence.⁵ School violence, rather unsurprisingly, has become an issue of national import in TT (Phillips 2008). Research indicates that school violence, and violence in general, has diverse causes/influences; therefore, there usually is not a singular cause/influence to which the violence can be attributed (Cornell 2006). In this article, although I hone in on my data pertaining to masculinities, it is not my aim to craft a causal relationship between masculinities and school violence, but rather to acknowledge that masculinities do play a role, and that it is of significance, for academicians, educators, and policymakers, to analyze this role. As Khoja-Moolji does, I too argue that "schools, teachers, and students draw upon this hegemonic construction of masculinity to legitimize and willfully ignore structural and direct violence in schools and, in doing so, participate in normalizing the relationship between violence and masculinity." (2012, 1)⁶

Research Design and Methodology

In TT, the Ministry of Education (MoE) is aware of the types of direct violence that occur within schools. I did not wish to replicate this data. I was (and remain) interested in the meanings people make about school violence, as well as the practices and structures that influence school violence. I employed a case study methodology since it is commensurate with investigations of phenomena within their "real-life context" (Yin 2003, 13). My in-school study permitted multi-level analyses, running the gamut of the global through to the micro level of the classroom.

I utilized purposive sampling to choose the research site based on desired characteristics (Johnson and Christensen 2008): 1) school in an urban center (since statistics show that violence in schools occurs more frequently in urban spaces (Noguera 2008; Phillips 2008⁷); 2) co-educational (to facilitate analyses around gender); and 3) a post-independence school site (former Junior Secondary School)^{8,9}. I eventually selected Survivors Secondary School¹⁰ (SSS); one that is nationally known for its academic underperformance and violent notoriety. SSS has about 900 students (over 90% of whom are of African descent), and features a much higher number of male students than female students.¹¹

Data Collection and Analysis

I collected data from the beginning of December 2009 to the end of June, 2010 (seven months), and I utilized ethnographic tools such as observations, participant observation, student focus groups and class discussions, semi-structured interviews and document analysis. I conducted nine focus groups/class discussions with a total of 84 students, 29 in-school interviews (two administrators, four deans, two safety officers, one guidance counselor/officer, 20 teachers), and four interviews with high-ranking, Ministry of Education (MoE) officials. I returned three years later for three weeks in May/June 2013. During this time, I spent one week in the Deans' office conducting observations, and two weeks in one classroom (of all male students; 21 total). Over the course of those three years (i.e. from 2010 - 2013) I stayed in touch with some of my adult participants, and it is my intention to return in two years' time for another seven-month follow up with the students whom I observed last year (May/June 2013) during my three-week visit.

Since the commencement of my research study, I have written theoretical and regular memos and field notes; these, along with observations, interview

and document data, provide the basis for inductive analysis (Strauss and Corbin 1990).

Theoretical Framework

For this analysis, I merged grounded theory and critical peace education. Since one of my main research concerns is with meaning making and interactions, grounded theory provided a good fit (Charmaz 2006; Glaser and Strauss 1999). Grounded theory permits themes to emerge from the data. Peace education is concerned with both negative peace (the cessation of direct violence) and positive peace (the creation of a culture of peace through the proactive dismantling of structural violence) (Harris 2002; Reardon 1988). Critical peace education insists on the analysis of power dynamics and intersectionalities (Bajaj and Brantmeier 2011). Taken together, grounded theory and critical peace education facilitate emergent themes around masculinities and school violence but with a critical eye on structural violence.

In the next few sections, I briefly sketch why it is important to study masculinities, and what constitute hegemonic masculinities. This sketching is vital because a great aspect of my analysis aims to posit what I call neocolonial hegemonic masculinity, as both dispositional/behavioral and structural.

Why focus on masculinities?

There has been much theorization of masculinities; in fact the number of studies of men and masculinities is increasing (Connell, Hearn and Kimmel 2005, 2);¹² although Barriteau contends that “Caribbean masculinities are yet to be adequately theorized” (2003, 325). However, this overall increase in studies may indicate willingness, and perhaps compulsion, to submit men to scrutiny. This submittal emanates from several sources: inter alia, the ruinous effects of

patriarchy, and desires to envision alternative, non-masculinist epistemologies and ontologies. Indeed, masculinities are being analyzed because masculinism has run amok. Masculinism attempts to ossify male domination by presenting it as unquestionable. However, masculinism is a self-corrosive ideology because masculinity itself is not ossified. Theorists posit that masculinity is not preformed (Messerschmidt 1993); that "it is rarely static or unchanging" (Parker 2002, 3). Kimmel conceptualizes masculinity "as a constantly changing collection of meanings that we construct through our relationship with ourselves, with each other, and with our world. Manhood is neither static nor timeless; it is historical" (2001, 29). Brittan adds that "[s]ince gender does not exist outside history and culture, this means that both masculinity and femininity are continuously subject to a process of reinterpretation" (2006, 51). Despite the ever-shifting terrain of masculinity, there still exists a hierarchy of masculinities, with hegemonic masculinity perched at the apex.

Hegemonic Masculinity(ies)

Connell notes:

At any given time, one form of masculinity rather than others is culturally exalted. Hegemonic masculinity can be defined as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy. Which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women (2005b, 77).

The parameters of what is masculinity may morph, loosen or tighten but amidst the new/er configurations there exists a masculinity that reigns supreme, because "[a]ll masculinities are not created equal" (Kimmel 2001, 31).¹³ Hegemonic masculinity stakes its ground atop this power disequilibrium; it procures and sustains¹⁴ this power by besmirching an array of other masculinities. Such debased masculinities are called subordinate or marginalized masculinities (Connell 2005b). Other categories of power relations,

such as race/ethnicity, class, sexuality also intersect with gender to foster complex social relations. For example, 'working class masculinities', 'black masculinities', and 'homosexual masculinities' can often be within the ranks of subordinate or marginalized masculinities.

However, heuristic considerations aside, one should be vigilant of reifying 'working class' or 'black' masculinities as fixed types¹⁵; Connell is emphatic that "terms such as 'hegemonic masculinity' and 'marginalized masculinity' name not fixed character types but configurations of practice generated in particular situations in a changing structure of relationships" (2005b, 81). It is therefore my intent to document the 'configurations of practices' within this secondary school that constitute what I characterize as neocolonial hegemonic masculinity.

In this next section, I briefly look at the hallmarks of hegemonic masculinity because they feature prominently in the data I present in my analysis.

Hallmarks of hegemonic masculinities

There is much subjective space that permits men (and some women and transgendered persons) to self-identify the boundaries of their own masculinities, giving rise to a wide assortment. Hegemonic masculinities, because they occupy the apex of masculinities, and because they are self-sustained by necessarily exclusionary apparatuses and processes, are demarcated by a generally common set of attributes and manifestations.¹⁶

Kimmel asserts that "[t]he hegemonic definition of manhood is a man *in* power, a man *with* power, and a man *of* power; simply said, "[m]anhood is equated with power—over women, over other men" (2001, 38). This seems to be one of the major hallmarks of hegemonic masculinities: the ardent desire and drive toward dominance and control (Messerschmidt 1993).¹⁷

Violence and hyper-aggressiveness seem to be major hallmarks of hegemonic masculinities as well: "[v]iolence is often the single most evident marker of manhood. Rather it is the willingness to fight, the desire to fight" (Kimmel 2001, 35). Another hallmark is hegemonic masculinity's penchant for binaries, for othering: "[h]egemonic masculinity demands a binary, hierarchical view of gender in which masculinity is equated with power, action, dominance, and so on, and femininity with their binary opposites" (Ervin 2011, 71).¹⁸ Linked to this is Adrienne Rich's (1993) notion of 'compulsory heterosexuality'; because hegemonic masculinity can only exist via othering and the distancing of itself from non-hegemonic masculinities, homosexuality and femininity represent real threats, with dilutive or debilitating potentiality.¹⁹ The need to deflect suspicions of weakness and to stave off any manner of questioning or impairing of hegemonic masculinity often contributes to homophobia, sexism and/or racism. In the data I present, all of these hallmarks are apparent: dominance, control, hierarchy, violence, hyper-aggressiveness and homophobia.

In sum, hegemonic masculinity is a standard, an idealized state. It matters not that its full attainment is outside the grasp of most men; in fact, its elusiveness is its charm, lure and *raison d'être*. The competition that it engenders is grist for the general masculinist mill: "not many men actually meet the normative standards...The number of men rigorously practicing the hegemonic pattern in its entirety may be quite small. Yet the majority of men gain from its hegemony, since they benefit from the patriarchal dividend, the advantage men in general gain from the overall subordination of women" (Connell 2005b, 79).²⁰

Because of space constraints, I will not go into much detail regarding a historicization of the production and globalization of masculinity.²¹ However, what is pivotal for my immediate uses in sketching out this notion of neocolonial hegemonic masculinity, is rendering a historical sense of the nexus of patriarchy, masculinity and global imperialism. Connell implicates imperialism as a major development in the historical production of masculinity: "Empire was a

gendered enterprise from the start, initially an outcome of the segregated men's occupations of soldiering and sea trading...The men who applied force at the colonial frontier, the 'conquistadors' as they were called in the Spanish case, were perhaps the first group to become defined as a masculine cultural type in the modern sense" (2005b, 187). It is this historicization of masculinity during European imperialist expansion that provides my analytical departure point to interrogate masculinity as per the Caribbean space. Reddock states that "[t]he Caribbean has often been described as the most historically globalized of all regions" (2004, 185), and as one of the major sites for European imperialist expansion, the Caribbean offers an ideal case study to look at colonial masculinities, which I will revisit later on when I explore the connection between (neo)colonial masculinities and educational structural violence.²²

Findings/ Discussions

Students Pullin' Rank

In this analysis, I commence with student data from both 2010 and 2013. SSS has gone through several large transitions in the past decade or so: being transformed from a Junior Secondary School (where students went to school part time, and only spent three years there), to a full-day, five-year school, and being part of a national pilot program that was aimed at changing SSS's co-ed status into single-sex (all male).²³ This single sex pilot, after three years, was ended by the Minister of Education in 2013. I therefore have data from the students prior to this change (in 2010) and just at the time when the decision to end the pilot was announced (in 2013).

When the decision to change to single-sex was announced in 2010, I asked the students their thoughts on this, as part of a larger conversation about the influences (or 'causes') of school violence:

- Researcher: What you think about the all-boy business?²⁴
- Students: Some boys might be glad. The majority will be small boys and they (older students) will want to tax the boys. The boys might be acting behbehry²⁵...
- Researcher: I know. But eventually it's going to turn into all boys...What you think about all boys [being here]?
- Steven: That is madness because all boys...boys are just violence.
- Researcher: So all boys are violence? You are not violent. So all boys are not violent. What do you mean?
- Steven: In a different way. Like what happens in St. Gregory's College²⁶; that will happen here as well. With all those boys, it might have some boys on the other side²⁷ (Student Focus Group with 2bSG, June 17, 2010).

In this focus group discussion, many themes arose: 1) the issue of older male students 'taxing' younger ones, 2) imputing mental/intellectual deficiency to male students, 3) construction of the equation 'boys = violence' and 4) too many young men sharing a space runs the risk of 'becoming overtaken by homosexuality'.

At SSS, several younger male students did hesitantly (and off the record) admit to the fact that older male students did 'tax' them. Sometimes, this taxing was to provide protection from other bullies, and other times the taxing was sheer bullying without any 'benefit' to the younger student. This seemed to have been especially compounded when SSS was de-shifted and there were students of different ages within the same class.²⁸ In such classrooms, older students (or the more physically developed) definitely 'ruled the roost.'

As regards the second point, the male students seemed to have internalized that SSS is a place for 'intellectual rejects' (i.e. in reference to 'behbehry'). SSS is a school that is nationally viewed as a place for underperforming students and its violent notoriety.²⁹ Throughout my time at this school, students and personnel spoke often or intimated about 'rejection'. The school's Principal, Mr. Romany, added:

So from day one now, the status quo is telling them that they would have failed...[the students] come here with no sense of buy-in; they don't want to be here...the status quo...indicates that when you come to a school like this, you are like quote unquote garbage; you aren't worth much (Interview, June 8, 2010).

Internalization of this notion of 'disposability' may have powerful ramifications for student expectations of themselves and others. In an environment where academic success is not expected, this may lead to students 'acting out' in defiance, which further reinforces the national stigma of the school being violent. It thus becomes a loop. In TT, where female students, overall, perform better academically than male students, academic achievement may come to be perceived as 'girls' domain³⁰; against this backdrop, the stigmatization of SSS, and the internalization of this notion of 'disposability' may sharpen the lines more boldly between the binary of academic achievement as female domain on one hand and academic underperformance and oppositionality to academic success as male/masculinist domain. In my observations at SSS, many of the boys who were considered a 'bad bwoy'³¹ (bad boy) often did not have a book bag and if they did carry one, there were hardly any books in it. Carrying school books or appearing to be studious therefore seemed to belong to the realm of 'subaltern' or 'subordinate' masculinities, clearly separated from the realm of hyper or hegemonic masculinity.³²

As regards the third point, the young men also characterized their biological sex as automatically implicating them in violence: "that is madness,

because boys is just violence." It is 'madness', thus inconceivable, that young men could share a space amicably and nonviolently. As one male student put it:

Da is it right dey, violence! Team ah man, yuh know when ah team ah man come togedder yuh know what dat does cause? Rukshun yuh know!... Cuz is boys. Sir, remember what I say! Dat goin and make real trouble! Real trouble; sir, if it was up to me sir, I would get outta here before next year. (Student Focus Group 4SG, June 14, 2010)³³

Many teachers also agreed with the male students' predictions. Ms. Seepersad (a teacher/administrator) added:

[I]t is really a de-motivator looking ahead and it would have a lot of violence because you have all boys coming from Debe, Carenage, John John, Sea Lots where all the gangs are. So what you [are] really doing is putting all the gangs into one school... What I see is just more work for us, more work, more stress and rather than focus on curriculum, all our time would be focused on discipline (Interview, May 19, 2010).

Unfortunately, these responses from both students and teachers, in hind sight, seemed prescient. Over the three years since the implementation of the single-sex pilot by the MoE, some of my respondents (administrators and teachers) reported (in May/June 2013) that violence in the school had indeed increased. Ms. Seepersad said "the experience was horrendous; it has not worked" (May 24, 2013). Another teacher/administrator, Ms. Robertson, added "it was overwhelming; we were just trying to keep the peace rather than teach" (May 28, 2013). One dean, Ms. Jaden, commented that because of increased frustration, more teachers were taking their holidays, resulting in a scenario where some classes were often unsupervised; in my observations,

indeed many of the classes in which violence erupted were often those unsupervised.

Therefore, the single-sex pilot project seemed to have fostered unintended consequences: frustrations among teachers; increased teacher absenteeism which meant reduced teaching time for students and the provision of more opportunities to fight while unsupervised; and entrenched perceptions among male students that “more boys = more violence”. The latter, I argue, has the capacity to reify unhealthy notions among young men regarding their capacities, or lack thereof, to bond with other men.

The fourth theme from the above quote speaks to the ‘fear’ of homosexuality, which, as mentioned before, is often an attribute of hegemonic masculinity. Having too many male students in one space is perceived as increasing the likelihood that homosexuality will ‘appear’/‘emerge’. My most recent time (i.e. June 2013) I spent with an all-male class for two weeks reaffirmed quite a bit about hegemonic masculinity: that athleticism, fighting/violence/aggression, heterosexuality, homophobia, dominance in relationships, and status, remain hallmarks of hypermasculinity (Klein 2006), a nexus of which helps to perpetuate the ‘Boy Code’ (Pollack 2001).³⁴ Those male students in basketball and who represented the school nationally on the basketball team were the objects of admiration by the girls, teachers and fellow male students. Since “typically, sporty boys have a higher status” (Swain 2005, 217), these basketball players were at the head of the pecking order and received a host of special privileges and preferential treatment from teachers and the school administration.³⁵ Involvement in high status sports helped “establish a normalized heterosexualized masculinity” (Martino and Frank 2006, 22).³⁶

In this particular all-male class,³⁷ violence, aggression and fighting were almost incessant. During this two week period, this class was often unsupervised. There was lots of ‘play fighting’ which would often result in serious fights. Fighting was the currency on the masculinist stock exchange so to speak. When the fight

was over, the young men adjudicated who had won and each of the fighters traded post-fight arguments in his own defense, including minutiae regarding which actual punches inflicted the most pain/hurt. It became very clear that the physically stronger young men were at the helm of the hierarchy and were hardly ever challenged. The two to three young men who held sway at the helm hardly ever physically challenged each other; I suspect that they did not want to risk losing any hegemonically masculinist credibility, and a consequent 'demotion'. This was linked to the image of the 'bad john'/ 'bad bwoy'/ 'gunta'. All of these terms, especially the last,³⁸ were paraded often and worn proudly. Those not in the top tier of hegemonic masculinity were the ones who actually fought the most because those at the top had already proven their might; it was those not at the top who had to prove where in the pecking order they were located. The competition was often a tragic and sad display, and it confirms what Khoja-Moolji argues: "[that] boys who are routinely marginalized [attempt] to re-inscribe power relations through the use of violence" (2012, 9).³⁹

Most of the violence I observed during these two weeks of classroom observations centered around indefatigable protectionism of one's heterosexuality.⁴⁰ Kimmel notes that "the fear—sometimes conscious, sometimes not—that others might perceive us as homosexual propels men to enact all manner of exaggerated masculine behaviors and attitudes to make sure that no one could possibly get the wrong idea" (2001, 37).⁴¹ As a result, homophobia becomes "a central discourse in the policing of boys' behaviours" (Mills 2012: 102) and such a discourse is "regularly deployed to punish such boys" who fail to live up to heterosexual masculinity (Ibid: 108).⁴²

In this classroom, there were several terms used to police (and enforce compulsory) heterosexuality, and excoriate any gesture, posture or speech that might betray homosexual inclinations: 'boysin', 'turnin', and 'bullaman.'

"sir, yuh turnin or wha?" ("sir, you are turning or what?")⁴³

“look how he ben ova so, he is a bulla man, boy!” (look how he is bending over, he is a bulla man, boy!)
“aye boy, doh touch me; yuh boysin or wha?” (hey, don’t touch me; you are boysin’ or what?)⁴⁴

“Turning” (or “changin’”), in this context, refers to ‘turning or changing into a homosexual’. Bullaman is a Trinidadian term, typically used in a derogatory fashion, to refer to homosexuals.⁴⁵ “Boysin” means to indulge in seemingly gay behavior; the actual word ‘boys’ has been re-appropriated from a noun into a verb representing homosexual activity.

Apart from policing behavior, these terms were used as general putdowns. As Ken Corbett succinctly argues “Faggot = anything. Faggot = everything” (2009, 173). The frequency with which these terms were deployed made it abundantly clear that these young men were inhabiting an exaggerated masculinity. In this class, the fact that the boundaries of masculinist performativity, including both hegemonic and marginalized masculinities, were so fastidiously policed, demonstrates the porosity of, and therefore vulnerability and fragility of, masculinity itself. “Achieving a masculine identity entails the repeated repudiation of the specter of failed masculinity” (Pascoe 2007, 5; as cited in Khoja-Moolji 2012, 9); and I contend that for these young men, who hail from violence-ridden, economically-distressed communities, and attending a school for ‘academic failures’, a hyper-compensatory masculinity is perhaps the only domain from which they can procure some semblance of control, dominance, registered victory and self-affirmation. The aforementioned discussion of homophobia is also relevant to the topic of academic underachievement; as Odette Parry states: “the data do suggest a link between homophobic attitudes...and male educational performance. This phenomenon materializes in the extremely anti-academic male sex/gender identity which develops as a result of homophobic attitudes” (2004, 175).

However, it was not only male students who policed the masculinity and heterosexuality of other male students. Female students partook in this exercise as well. Mr. Joseph, a safety officer, observed:

[Y]uh might find that there is one guy in a class wit ten girls and dey would pick on him ... he have to be macho; if he not disrespectful and try to stomp authority den he is viewed on as a he/she. And he would be in a lot of trouble because dey would pick on him, dey would lash him, dey would call him names because of that (Interview, March 15, 2010).⁴⁶

In this quote, we see that "subaltern masculinist dispositions offer quasi-homophobic license to be bullied. This therefore enfolds into a vicious cycle, where the boys must be 'disrespectful' and attempt to 'stomp authority' so as to gain masculinist bona fides" (Williams 2012, 138). The male students are therefore constrained by their male and female peers to consistently maintain this masculinist façade.

In fact, not only did many female students actively constrain the masculinist performativity of male students but they were perceived as a vital component in the adult toolkit for addressing school violence. I call this the 'girl as tranquilizer' intervention (Williams 2012). Below, I offer some quotes from both male students and female teachers about the mediating, tranquilizing presence/effect of female students on male students:

"[N]o girls, da is it! Dey lookin to form a team one time. Da is it right dey: violence!"⁴⁷ (Student Focus Group 4SG, June 14, 2010)

"[I]f ah boy come an get yuh vex now, and yuh hadda talk to a man yuh goin an get more mad...but ah gyurl go cool yuh dong"⁴⁸ (Student Focus Group 4SG, June 14, 2010).

Ms. Clarkson: As a matter of fact, de girls in my opinion help keep classes calm.

Researcher: How so?

Ms. Clarkson: I think is jes because girls are, some of them, their personality tends to keep a measure of control as compared to all boys; yuh could imagine thirty wile boys or twenty-five wile Form One boys, [ages] 11-14 in a classroom? That spells disaster⁴⁹ (Teacher Interview, May 13, 2010).

Ms. Seepersad: I talk to a lot of the students and coming from them, and coming from us too, but from what they say, the girls helped to temper the boys in our school down and that is a real calming force, and what they say to me "Miss, Miss, when a teacher tell yuh someting and yuh real frustrated and real wanta tell back dat teacher someting, Miss, we little girlfriend is come and hold we hand and say 'oh gosh, doh worry wit dat, calm down,' but miss that is cool we brain and we don't ting."⁵⁰ So from their perspective, the girls really do temper them down and their reaction to the teachers in particular. I think we underestimate how much that happens (Teacher/Administrator Interview, May 19, 2010).

The excerpts above demonstrate this reliance on female students as a 'tranquilizing' intervention for school violence among male students. We see this recurring theme of male students and school personnel stating that if male students are angry/upset, talking to another male student can exacerbate the situation whereas the presence/counsel of a female student can have a de-escalatory impact. Ms. Clarkson believes that this 'tranquilizing' effect is a personality trait among female students; however, I argue that these essentialist notions place an undue burden on female students, and extricate male

students fairly easily from their responsibility for self-regulation of their own behaviors and male-to-male interactions. These also reveal still deeply-entrenched notions of how female students should behave;⁵¹ when I asked adult respondents about increasing violence among girls, many stated "de gyurls geh-in jes as bad as de boys".⁵²

Although I did observe many female students actively enforcing compulsory heterosexuality among male students, I did note one case where one male student, who was called effeminate/gay by many other male students, was shielded from these critiques by his female friends. Below, I offer excerpts from my field notes about this male student:

The first time I saw him, he was walking among an all-girl group. Never after did I see him walking with any boys. His linguistic cadence was markedly different from most of the other boys. Most other boys tried to deepen their voices to seem more manly and more mature. Many of the young ones were trying to take early flight from pubescence. His gait was markedly different from the other boys too. Many of the boys had a 'crawl' or 'bounce': those that were high value currency on street corners and in their neighborhoods. But he had a certain saunter, one that automatically revealed his Otherness. Why nary an attempt to disguise his otherness? He walked with a quiet confidence, an embrace of his otherness, a gentle defiance. How did he 'survive' so long with such a differentiated speech and gait?

...Today is a school wide performance in the main hall. It is a hot day. The energy in the hall is frenzied. Some boys seem disinterested in being here. Some, perhaps most, seem content to be out of classes, though not inclined to be stuck in a hall under the gaze of the entire school staff. A group of girls ascends the stage to render a dance performance, and he is the only boy among them. I hear some snickers from different parts of the co-ed audience. The little I can discern however is coming mainly from other boys. Shortly after

being on stage, the music begins and those assembled on the stage, who have by now settled into their starting positions, launch into a high octane dance routine. This boy is at the center of the entire ensemble and renders his moves with an exactitude that surpasses even most of his female cast. Girls in the audience are cheering every creative move and the boys in the audience, for the most part, seem unsettled by his competent rendition. Some hiss “batty bwoy”⁵³, others “bullaman”, others “sissy”. He doesn’t skip a beat it seems. The choreography ends and they are tendered a rapturous applause from the audience. Some boys near me refuse to clap, perhaps demonstrating their disapproval of what they perceive to be his ‘girliness’ (Excerpts from Fieldnotes, 2010).

This male student, I should add, was of mixed ethnicity (seemingly of African and East Indian descent) and hung out with female students of African-descent. In attempting to analyze why black female students offered this male student a buffer from other homophobic male students and from their own enforcement of compulsory male heterosexuality, I conjecture that perhaps his ethnicity plays a partial role. In the social imaginary of Trinidad & Tobago society, men of Indian or mixed descent have been feminized and emasculated by the colonial apparatus and then subsequently by the gaze of the African-descended male.⁵⁴ In a school where most of the students are of African descent, this male student is doubly othered: his ethnicity and his differentiated, marginalized masculinity; the latter draws censure, and the former perhaps procures him some sort of social/cultural capital, based in a wider societal context that is immensely colorist. This intricate intersection of ethnicity, masculinity and school violence warrants more in-depth research.

Nonetheless, the case of this male student reminds us that despite the oppressive weight of hegemonic masculinity and the potential lure (and risk) of totalizing, essentializing analyses, he displayed a facet of human agency, which is often overlooked in structuralist perspectives. His consistent, defiant exhibition

of a differentiated form of masculinity provided useful, contrastive analysis in my exploration of the fissures and vulnerabilities of hegemonic masculinity.

Structural Violence and Pullin' Rank: Neocolonial Hegemonic Masculinity

School Personnel Pullin' Rank

An analysis of school violence and masculinity would be incomplete without an inclusion of the masculinist posturing/ 'pullin' rank' by school personnel and the educational system (as represented by the MoE). Elsewhere (Williams 2013), I argue how the limited discursive parameters around what constitutes actual school violence hinders a comprehensive interrogation of the violence rendered by adults at SSS and the violence rendered more systemically (via, e.g, the MoE).

As Swain states "[s]chools are invariably hierarchical and create and sustain relations of domination and subordination; each orders certain practices in terms of power and prestige..." (Swain 2005, 215). I observed how the MoE's hegemonically masculinist mode of hierarchical interactions are replicated through several strata within SSS. Some teachers, off the record, confided that they feel estranged from the overall administration and management of the school; that they are excluded from democratic participation. However, the largest chasm that existed seemed to have been between school personnel and students. Noted educator, Paolo Freire (1990), decried the hierarchies that separate school personnel and students, and ultimately hinder authentic relationship building and substantive education.

At SSS, there were two safety officers (both male) who were responsible for physically intervening in serious matters at the school. The deans (all female) were responsible for adjudicating disputes and meting out 'punishments' commensurate with the 'infraction'. This gender differentiation within the disciplinary apparatus of SSS, which reflects prevailing notions of men being

paired with physicality and emotional austerity, and women with emotional expressiveness and nurturance, sends a reinforcing message to students regarding discipline and gender performativity. A teacher, Ms. Faure, characterized many male teachers as “anti-counseling”, who viewed ‘talking’ with students as too “soft” and instead preferred more physical interventions to deal with school violence. She also elaborated on how tensions between male teachers and male students sometimes revealed deeper, problematic issues that the male students have with their own fathers:

Ms. Faure: In our society...we have a macho image of a man in a trini society... they believe that if you counsel a boy, I think men are so much anti counseling, I don't know why, that you're being soft, you goin' that way, you sugar coating, you're tryna be a mommy. But if you hold on to them yuh (you) hit dem (them) a hard lash den (then) they'll wake up and get the reality. Because the fathers in the society have been the ones who distribute licks nah; they would be the beaters in the home, and the mothers would be the ones you run to and cry to, “ah jes get licks (I just got a beating)!” So it's really a role thing that men are perceived in a particular way and I believe some of the men want to counsel but how will they be looked upon by their counter parts?... [It']s how society have painted them...you need to have that physical, you have to show physical dominion.

Researcher: Have you spoken with any male teachers about the effectiveness of their methods?

Ms. Faure: Yes, yes. They say it works for them. [They tell me] “[s]o you could do what works for you and I'll do what works for me.” Now traditionally if you know about these schools the boys are more accustomed to females, they doh (don't) see their fathers at all

which is a big problem in society now...[s]o right away what I could do to a young man, I could probably pass and do him this (motioning to me a slight tap on the shoulder), "come on, behave!" But if a male teacher does that, he's ready [i.e. the student] to fight because he doesn't know his father, he has no strong male input in his life; doh (don't) hit him, don't touch him. But a female could do it so things that we could get away with a male teacher can't. They can't have that communion... I remember walking into a class years ago...was Mr. Farrell, a phys ed. class. I used to teach them; I had no problems with the boys and I walked in and he was there and he is like "son, son," and the boy is like "don't call me son!" And he is like "come on nah son". ("come on son") And the boy got up for him and say "I told you don't call me your son". He (the student) was offended cuz he did not have a father and he was assuming that this teacher wanted to be his father. He doh (doesn't) have a father, so doh (don't) pretend; he got up, I saw the fire in his eyes, and I know if sir stayed there one more minute he (the teacher) would have been lick dong (would have been knocked to the ground). Now female teachers could do that we could say "son, yuh doin wrong (son, you are doing wrong), come on" and they like it! You see that they appreciate it. They don't appreciate it when the male teachers do it (Interview, May 13, 2010).

In this extended quote, there are several issues that emerge regarding discipline and masculinity. The machismo of the wider society is implicated in the disciplinary choices that male teachers make. This female respondent perceives a linkage to physical dominion, itself a hallmark of hegemonic

masculinity. In the discourse on school violence in Trinidad, this is an under-considered domain: the impact of male teachers' masculinity on school violence. It seems that male students receive the male teachers' masculinist posturing as a form of 'pullin rank' and therefore a breach of the students' own masculinity. In the pecking order of masculinity, the 'pullin rank' by the male teachers pits their own masculinity over that of the students. In this regard, male teachers exert hegemonic masculinity, which may foster tensions in the school, lead to physical conflicts between male teachers and male students (or male students and other students as a form of displacing the disempowered feelings male students experience in their physical interactions with male teachers) or even hinder healthy relationships between male teachers and male students that may be necessary for optimal or improved student learning.

During the first phase of my research (in 2010), I witnessed many instances, with varied intensities, of the safety officers' employing corporal punishment on the students.⁵⁵ School personnel closely monitored students' uniforms for any deviations/alterations, and bookbags were often checked at the school gate for weapons. These disciplinary technologies of surveillance seemed to have been aimed at exerting control over students' bodies and eventually 'docilizing' them.⁵⁶ I often heard deans and safety officers say "I am going to make my rounds" or someone would suggest to them "you should go police that corridor."⁵⁷ This penitentiary discourse, I argue, is a technology of hegemonic masculinity, for it seeks to both characterize the male students' masculinities as subordinate, while policing and dominating them.⁵⁸

This policing and domination come in verbal forms as well. One afternoon, one of the deans was trying to resolve a conflict with a male student. She threatened to call his mother in to the school and he began to cry. She told him "no tears; come be a man, talk to meh (me)!"⁵⁹ On another occasion, I was observing the early morning routine where students were being searched at the entrance gate by MTS security.⁶⁰ As one male student was being searched, he began to protest and a female MTS personnel said "leave all dat arguin' fuh de

gyuls nah!"⁶¹ During both phases of my research at SSS, I observed many instances of these types of policing and demarcating of male students' masculinity. In these two cases, it is female adults who were reinforcing that emotional expressiveness and verbalizing/articulation of feelings (even those perceived as protestation) do not belong within the domain of acceptable male behavior.

Linked with the verbal policing of male students' masculinity is a verbal violence as it pertains to the perception of students' intellectual deficiencies. Some teachers' calling students "jackass" or "stupid"⁶² imputes academic incompetence to them, which reproduces and reinforces the narrative of 'uneducability'/'disposability' that I discussed before. This verbal violence, which many students denounced but which many adult respondents rationalized as culturally specific (thus, acceptable) forms of discipline, not only sometimes aggravated incidents involving physical violence, but can also legitimate violence as a tool for conflict resolution.

I argue that this coupling of heavily surveilled/punished male corporeality and the deficit view of students' minds/intellect has the capacity to augment students' marginalization within school. An in-school marginalization, which can fuel continued dropout rates, disinterest in education, and diminished educational outcomes, risks exacerbating the schism that already exists between the larger society and the economically-depressed and violent communities from which many of these students hail.

Ministry of Education Pullin' Rank

In this final section, I wish to implicate the role of the MoE in school violence and interrogate its relationship with SSS (and other schools in Trinidad) as a structural form of 'pullin rank'. In my conclusion, I will characterize this type of pullin' rank as an exertion of neocolonial hegemonic masculinity. I view this as

a necessary analysis because focusing solely on ground-level/micro manifestations of masculinity without a critical exploration of the wider structural network in which they are embedded serves to conceal the role of macro factors and influences which, in turn, maintains the narrow discourse on school violence that centers primarily on individuals. As Swain states:

schooling is a political issue that plays a role in wider social developments. Schools exist, of course, within their own structural contexts, including the structure of their national education system, and these pressures have a profound influence on schools' policies and organizations, as "macro" interactions are enacted on the "micro" stage (2005, 214).

In anchoring this final analysis of the MoE, it is important to remember the context of state formation. Feminists make the charge that the "state [is] a patriarchal institution, a vehicle of men's power" (Connell 2002, 103), and that "the masculinization of the state...is principally a relationship between state institutions and hegemonic masculinity" (Ibid, 105). Indeed, the state possesses the resources to regulate gender relations (Messerschmidt 1993). Watson attests that "state sovereignty is a masculinized nationalist signifier that reflects both the unity and the separation the national state expresses" (2003, 57).

In the specific context of Trinidad, one cannot avoid a discussion of colonial masculinity⁶³ and its role in nation building. Connell notes that "the postcolonial state may appropriate colonial models of masculinity for the project of nation building" (2005a, 76). In order to more comprehensively apprehend the neocolonial web of structural violence in which masculinities and school violence intersect at my research site (i.e. SSS), it is vital to discuss this notion of colonial masculinities.

Expanded imperialism was the channel through which hegemonic masculinities were trafficked from the metropolises in Europe (Connell 2005b); this exportation occurred under brutal conditions and with violent technologies.⁶⁴

Power, the leitmotif of hegemonic masculinity (Synnott 2009),⁶⁵ was fully embodied in what bell hooks (2004) calls "plantation patriarchy"; a patriarchy that "rel[ied] on a paternalist masculinity to legitimate [the colonizers'] rule" (Patil 2008, 195).⁶⁶ Colonial masculinity, but more specifically, colonial hegemonic masculinity⁶⁷ was obsessed with dominance and control. This was exacted through oppressively close surveillance and discipline.⁶⁸ The disciplinary technologies were employed for the purposes of permanently casting the colonized body as othered.⁶⁹ The othered body was subjected to a sustained regime of emasculation, infantilization, feminization and hypersexualization⁷⁰, all scripted as integral to *la mission civilisatrice*.⁷¹ This schism between the colonizer and colonized echoes Connell's (2005b) postulation about the impact of Cartesian philosophy on masculinities: the splintering of reason from nature, and mind from body.⁷² White hegemonic masculinity represented reason and mind, and the marginalized/subordinate masculinity of the colonized em'bodied' nature, all those attributes discarded from the hyper-rationalized world of colonial hegemonic masculinity.

Theorists, like Linden Lewis, assert that these patriarchal standards have been internalized, and therefore have an impact on contemporary life.⁷³ This has indeed been the case for the Caribbean: many "are small, fragile island states retaining many administrative and social structures from...colonial rule" (De Lisle, Smith and Jules 2010, 405). This affects not only spheres of governance and culture, but economics and development. Downes argues that "identification of the education system, church and other vehicles as critical purveyors of ruling-class hegemony is relevant to an understanding of hegemonic masculinity" (2004, 107).⁷⁴ TT's Ministry of Education (MoE) is an arm of the state and, as such, is a vehicle for the implementation of the country's vision for human capital development⁷⁵; in this sense, it is a highly bureaucratized, functionalist, political organization.

The MoE oversees a bifurcated educational system; one that owes its genesis to the colonial system in TT (Williams 2012). The educational system is

divided into 'prestige' schools (where the academically strongest students, or those of financial means, attend); the rest of the country's students, constituting the majority, attend a vast array of non-prestige schools. Many of the 'prestige' schools were formed in the colonial era and today are an integral component in the state's maintenance of a class-stratified society. In acknowledging the differential access to resources between 'prestige' and non-prestige schools, Mr. Romany, the Principal, said "we need a lot of resources here to ensure that these children here get the same opportunities as those in St. Gregory's College"⁷⁶ (Interview on June 8, 2010). I characterize this educational othering via a 'prestige'/non-prestige binary as a manifestation of neocolonial hegemonic masculinity. By perpetuating a colonial system of education and by inadvertently labeling most schools as non-prestige, it sends the message to many of those students that they are 'uneducable' and unworthy of investment.

During a discussion with students in June 2013, I was encouraging the class (of all young men) to make attending college a high priority. One student lowered his voice and trained his gaze toward the floor as he chimed in "sir, we can't do that; this school is for slow children." Somewhere in his brief educational career, someone or something had conveyed to this young man that he was too 'slow' to amount to anything of worth in life. I am not attributing a direct causal link between the MoE and this particular student's conception of self-worth/esteem etc, but I am categorically saying that students are painfully aware that when the MoE assigns them to a school like SSS, they are cognizant of society's view of such schools. This is confirmed in an interview I had with the Principal at SSS: "That's why [the students] write all over [the walls], they destroy, they vandalize because they don't own this" (Mr. Romany, Interview, June 8, 2010). He stated that society views students who attend SSS as "a waste of time"; a message that they then internalize. He makes a direct link between the violence he sees at the school and the students' conception of themselves and their worth. I characterize this societal message of 'uneducability' as a form of structural violence.

SSS, a school created (circa 1978) in the post-independence era, has had many major changes as a result of MoE decisions. The MoE, a hierarchical organization, have rendered many of these decisions without consultations with the SSS administration, teachers, parents or students.⁷⁷ Such a mode of neocolonial governance, which denies democratic participation, in favor of exclusion, alienation, othering, dominance, hierarchy, and control, very much resembles colonial hegemonic masculinity, and provides an environment in which violence in schools is exacerbated.⁷⁸

The multiple layers of hegemonic masculinity from the historical and the global, to the nation-state (via the MoE), and school personnel, exert significant pressure on the surveilled bodies of the young men at SSS. This is all compounded when class and sexuality are factored into the equation. In a society where these men perhaps feel infantilized and feminized by a historically-informed and macro-structural violence, the irruption of neocolonial hegemonic masculinities comes as no surprise.

Conclusion

This article on masculinities represents a sliver of my interests in the violence of educational inequity⁷⁹ in Trinidad and Tobago, and the wider Caribbean. The dropout rate across TT has indeed caused much alarm. At SSS, for example, in one Form 3 (grade 8) class, by the end of the academic year, over 50% of the students had dropped out. Most were young men. Black, young men. In this globalized economy, the consequences of not receiving a high school diploma are increasing (Fine 1991). For students from economically-disadvantaged backgrounds, this could spell extended generational cycles of un- or under-employment. What I have not explored here in this article is the alienating nature of anachronistic and unengaging curricula and pedagogies. Many of these young men at SSS are very interested in vocational/technical education and yet the MoE has not upgraded most of the machinery in

decades, undermining an area in which more young men could be involved and at which more could be excelling. In the end, we see many young men embrace anti-intellectualism,⁸⁰ drop out of school, reinforce their class positionality,⁸¹ and thereby materialize into society's expectation/conceptualization of them.

Decolonizing Hegemonic Masculinities

Since my entire argument has been a multi-level constructed one, my main recommendations will necessarily reside there as well. Trinidad and Tobago, and other former colonies, must begin/continue attempts at decolonization. As much as we can, we must stand in 'Third World' solidarity and consider ways in which we can resist, re-appropriate and/or interrupt the hegemonic masculinity of global neoliberalism.⁸² Citizens of the Caribbean have to hold their governments more accountable and protest against archaic masculinist nation state-to-citizen relations. Civil society must be widened and deepened to include more voices in decision-making processes. Our political leaders can engender a transformation by enacting more inclusive, horizontalist structures for sustainable partnerships with and for the people.

The Ministry of Education must embark on a historic educational revolution: overhauling curricula, pedagogies and the structure of the educational system itself. The global mandate of *Education For All* has caused discursive *rigor mortis* of radical educational equity; the discourse has stopped at access for all, and nowhere on the horizon is there a serious, participatory debate on equity and social justice in education in TT. The MoE has to envision schools, principals, teachers, parents and students as partners, which requires a significant attitudinal and behavioral shift. At SSS, there are many students who teachers report need some social work or psychological care. At SSS, there has not been a single psychologist, psychotherapist or social work assigned specifically for this school for quite some time. Some students need

professionalized outlets to process their traumas resultant from experiencing sexual, psychological, physical and/or emotional abuse. Within schools, teachers "must think beyond the 'logic' of normal school performance in order to inhabit the 'logic' of the student" and to resist "turn[ing] differences into deficits" (Newkirk 2002, 12, 13).⁸³ Action research projects as a component of curricula can assist in raising consciousness and critical sensitivity in students (Mills 2012, 109). We need pedagogies that equip our teachers and our students with the knowledges, attitudes, and behaviors to craft, embrace and maintain "fluid selves...[which] can serve to support adaptive responses and resistance to hegemonic masculinity" (Kahn, Homes, and Brett 2011, 52). Caribbean researchers and practitioners need to continue work on looking at masculinities so as to better "understand the gendered dimensions of identity development" (Davis, Thomas and Sewalish 2006, 306).

This entire agenda must be underwritten by social justice and critical self-awareness, toward a dismantling of neocolonial masculinities: structurally, inter- and intra-personally. If the discourse and the attendant interventions to address school violence remain at the individual level, then we are bound to ignore the reinforcing role of history and the contemporary structures and processes that still bear its imprint and inner logic.

¹ My research is partially driven, in a utilitarian sense, by the gravity of the issue of school violence in TT. However, I do perceive schools as ideal spaces for analyzing masculinities because, as intersectional spaces, "[they] are not passive mirrors of race, class, gender, and sexuality hierarchies in society today. Schools actively help to form those hierarchies in the political, economic, and ideological domains. Education is central to producing ideologies that undergird race, class, gender, and sexuality relations of oppression and resistance" (Weber 2010, 183).

² The term structural violence was initially articulated by Johan Galtung (1969). It looks beyond direct or material violence and represents institutions, processes and structures that diminish human dignity and render harm.

³ See Williams 2013 for a more comprehensive discussion of what I posit as postcolonial structural violence and how it represents the constricted discursive boundaries of youth violence at this secondary school in Trinidad.

⁴ The Caribbean has one of the highest murder rates in the world: 30 per 100, 000 annually (UNDP 2012)

⁵ In 2012, TT had 379 murders (37.9 per 100, 000 persons) (United States Dept. of State 2013).

⁶ Also, see Stoudt 2006 for a study of violence that suggests that violence is embedded in the social fabric of, and in the power relations within, the school.

⁷ Noguera speaks to the U.S. context, and Phillips to the TT context.

⁸ When TT became independent in 1962, the economic demands for increased human capital development, and a national desire for more educational provisions led the Government of Trinidad and Tobago (GoTT) to expand the educational system (Campbell 1992; 1996; 1997). Before independence, there were some schools (Traditional Grammar Schools (TGS); today called 'prestige' schools) created and operated by different religious denominations (Stewart 1981). In the post-1962 era, the GoTT created many primary and secondary schools (including Junior Secondary Schools, which, from their creation to about 5-8 years ago, used to be three-year schools but have all been altered into full five-year secondary schools) to accommodate more students. These post-independence schools were created in a context where the TGSs retained much of their social capital; this effectively sealed into place a dual educational system. Today, students with a stronger academic background, generally attend the TGSs. London describes many of the post-1962 schools as being "overpopulated, understaffed, poorly resourced...associated with low achievement, indiscipline and a consequent high failure rate" (1994, 412). Student density is much higher than that of the TGSs and many of the students who attend the post-1962 schools are from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Deosaran notes that "the secondary school system seems to be catering to and breeding an entrenched social stratification cycle" (2007, 106). Phillips (2008) has noted that most reported incidents of youth-related physical violence are from the lowest performing post-independence schools.

⁹ Secondary schools represent opportune sites for studying masculinities: "it is possible to conclude that the school plays a relatively more prominent role in the construction of identity for boys in primary and early secondary schooling" (Swain 2005, 213). Messerschmidt affirms: "schooling is one of the chief social milieu for the development of youth crime and also a social setting that has institutionalized gender and, therefore, patterned ways in which femininity and masculinity are constructed and represented." (1993, 87)

¹⁰ This is a pseudonym I assigned to the research site; one that recognizes the students' resilience. In this article, I have assigned pseudonyms to each of my participants and I have altered some facts about the school so as to provide it with as much confidentiality as possible.

¹¹ During my first research study at SSS four years ago, the ratio of young men to young women was 60:40. Three years later (as of June 2013), it was estimated at 80:20. However, this ratio started changing again as of September 2013 when the MoE ended its single-sex pilot.

¹² As per the Caribbean, Reddock notes that caliber work on masculinities is also increasing (2003, 89-117). However, while penning this article on masculinities, and focusing on school violence and young men in a Trinidadian secondary school, I have remained acutely aware of this critique: "Epistemologically, given the patriarchal nature of Caribbean societies, the history of the region, its political evolution, its nationalist struggles, its labor advances, and its literary, creative and cultural productivity have all tended until relatively recently to be examined androcentrically." (Lewis 2002, 57-58)

¹³ Kimmel qualifies: "or rather, we are all *created* equal, but any hypothetical equality evaporates quickly because our definitions of masculinity are not equally valued in our society. One definition of manhood continues to remain the standard against which other forms of manhood are, measured and evaluated." (2001, 31).

¹⁴ The sustaining power of hegemonic masculinity is refueled by the surveillance of many men, even those who are not possessors of hegemonic masculinity: "We are under the constant careful scrutiny of other men. Other men watch us, rank us, grant our acceptance into the realm of manhood. Manhood is demonstrated for other men's approval. It is other men who evaluate the performance" (Ibid, 33).

¹⁵ We experience and craft our lives not through singular lens; in fact our lives are constituted by myriad identities that go beyond the oft-cited ones of race, class, gender and sexuality. Intersectional analyses undoubtedly enrich, yet complicate our efforts to comprehend social phenomena such as enduring discriminations and inequalities. For more on intersectionality, see Newman 2007, and Weber 2010.

¹⁶ We ought to be reminded that hegemonic masculinity is also mediated by cultural variances.

¹⁷ This attribute of hegemonic masculinity tends to appear across many cultures. One such example is via the term 'macho': "when applied to Mexicans or Latinos, 'macho' remains imbued with such negative attributes as male dominance, patriarchy, authoritarianism, and spousal abuse" (Mirandé 2001, 43).

¹⁸ Queer theory has been at the forefront in challenging binaries: "Queer theory inquired into the gendered splitting of qualities such as hard/soft, dominant/submissive, along the lines of sharply defined binaries" (Parlow 2011, 216).

¹⁹ Speaking to the American context, Kimmel notes "Women and gay men become the "other" against which heterosexual men project their identities, against whom they stack the decks so as to compete in a situation in which they will always win, so that by suppressing them, men can stake a claim for their own manhood. Women threaten emasculation by representing the home, workplace, and familial responsibility, the negation of fun. Gay men have historically played the role of the consummate sissy in the American popular mind because homosexuality is seen as an inversion of normal gender development" (Kimmel 2001, 37).

²⁰ Connell qualifies that "Monetary benefits are not the only kind of benefit. Others are authority, respect, service, safety, housing, access to institutional power. And control over one's own life" (2002, 142).

²¹ See Connell 2005b for great detail on this.

²² Connell and Messerschmidt warn that "[i]t is tempting to assume a simple hierarchy of power or authority, running from global to regional to local, but this could be misleading" (2005, 850). However, my analysis seeks to discuss some of the post-colonial discontinuities by disinterring the history of colonial masculinities and linking those with contemporaneous neocolonial forms. As Allen states, "In Trinidad, it is particularly difficult to separate sociological analysis from the history of colonial and imperial domination" (1998, 77).

²³ The MoE's pilot program to transform 20 schools into single-sex schools was aimed at reducing school violence in these schools and boosting the academic performance of their students. Part of the rationale for this was premised on the academic successes of the 'prestige' schools (which are mostly single-sex schools).

²⁴ This was four years ago (in 2010) when the MoE made the decision to begin, year by year, to eventually transform SSS from co-ed to an all-male school.

²⁵ "Behbehry" is a derogatory term for someone who is socially inept. Similar to the derogatory use of the term "retarded" in the American context.

²⁶ Name of nearby 'prestige' (all male) school, where it is purported that some male students engage in homosexual practices. As a child growing up in Trinidad, I did frequently hear of such rumors about most all-male "prestige" schools (i.e. the TGSs).

²⁷ "On the other side" is in reference to boys being gay.

²⁸ Four years later, SSS still struggles with this issue of classes having students of different ages. These cohorts are constituted by students placed at SSS by the MoE after the national exam.

²⁹ Further research is required in TT to more fully understand how violence may intersect with students' internalization of their perceived academic abilities.

³⁰ See Plummer and Geofroy 2010, and Sewell 1997 for discussions of the intersection between masculinity and the perception of schooling/academics as non-masculine domains. Plummer and Geofroy add that “the pressures to eschew roles that have become discredited as soft, gay or feminine seems to be driving young men towards dangerous, risk-taking hyper-masculinities” (2010, 1).

³¹ A bad bwoy is one who possesses swagger and street cred, and is viewed as cool.

³² See Richardson 2012.

³³ “That is it right there, violence! Team of guys, you know when a team of guys comes together you know what happens? Commotion, you know!... Because it's boys. Sir, remember what I say! That is going to make real trouble! Real trouble; sir, if it was up to me sir, I would get out of here before next year. “(Student Focus Group 4SG, June 14, 2010)

³⁴ Pollack concludes “over the years my research findings have shown that as far as boys today are concerned, the old Boy Code—the outdated and constructing assumptions, models, and rules about boys that our society has used since the nineteenth century—is still operating in force” (2001, 72).

³⁵ They were also encouraged to be good role models for the students, although some often flouted the rules regarding punctuality and uniform usages, etc.; behaviors that may tarnish the bad bwoy image.

³⁶ Additionally, Khoja-Moolji argues that “such valorization of aggression [in sports] sends a strong message to boys—that it is legitimate for them to employ violence and use their bodies as tools or weapons to achieve an end and dominate others” (2012, 6).

³⁷ In this class, ages ranged from 12-16; however, this does not occur in ‘prestige’ schools because students are generally within their age cohort.

³⁸ Gunta is a term used often in Jamaican music, and means gangster.

³⁹ This point by Khoja-Moolji can serve as a broader explanation for my earlier points on intellectual rejection/ feelings of disposability.

⁴⁰ Within the Caribbean, homosexuality “is a fairly complex phenomenon” and within our music there is often homophobia conveyed (Lewis 2003). This is akin to my earlier discussion of compulsory heterosexuality (Rich 1993).

⁴¹ Moss adds that “it is mostly in men that internalized homophobia generates the extreme and unbearable states of mind” (2012, 63).

⁴² Stoudt 2006 calls this “peer disciplining”.

⁴³ June 11, 2013. Male student said this to a male teacher who had placed his hand on the student's shoulder in an attempt to get him to focus on the task at hand. Another student chimes in “yuh hadda watch sir; sir yuh changin'!” (“You have to look at sir closely; sir you are changing!”) ‘Changin’ here insinuates that the teacher is ‘changing’ from what he was perceived before (i.e. as a heterosexual male) to perhaps someone who is homosexual.

⁴⁴ These last two were repeatedly said over the two-week observation period in this class.

⁴⁵ To ‘bull’ means to have sex and it is not typically used in a derogatory manner, though many perceive its usage in public spaces to be crass. However, Bullaman is a pejorative term. See Crichlow (2004: 185-222) for a self-reflective discussion of this term in the Trinidadian context.

⁴⁶ "[Y]ou might find that there is one guy in a class with ten girls and they would pick on him ... he has to be macho; if he is not disrespectful and try to stomp authority then he is viewed as a he/ she. And he would be in a lot of trouble because they would pick on him, they would lash him, they would call him names because of that" (Interview, March 15, 2010).

⁴⁷ "no girls, that's it! They are looking to form a team immediately. That's it right there: violence!" Forming a team refers to male students forming gangs when there aren't any girls present in that social environment.

⁴⁸ "if a boy comes and gets you vex now, and you have to talk to a guy you are going to become angrier...but a girl will cool you down".

⁴⁹ Ms. Clarkson: As a matter of fact, the girls in my opinion help keep classes calm.

Researcher: How so?

Ms. Clarkson: I think it's just because girls are, some of them, their personality tends to keep a measure of control as compared to all boys; you could imagine thirty wild boys or twenty-five wild Form One boys, [ages] 11-14, in a classroom? That spells disaster.

⁵⁰ "Miss, Miss, when a teacher tells you something [by which you feel offended] and you are really frustrated and really want to tell back that teacher something, Miss, our little girlfriend comes and holds our hand and says 'oh gosh, don't worry with that, calm down,' but Miss, that cools our brain and we don't [do anything rash]."

⁵¹ Although in these particular cases female students are conceptualized as 'tranquilizers' for male students, in the wider discourse on male underachievement, I do acknowledge the double bind in which female students are often placed. As Odette Parry notes: "In the Caribbean...it has become popular not only to talk about "male marginalization" in the context of education...but also to see educational successes of females and educational failure of males as two sides of the same equation. That is, males fail because females do well. ...this is seen as acceptable because females are perceived as villains and males as victims of the education system" (2004, 168).

⁵² "the girls are getting just as bad as the boys".

⁵³ Batty bwoy, which is more popularly used in Jamaica, is a derogatory term for gay/homosexual.

⁵⁴ See Brereton 2010 for a broader discussion of this.

⁵⁵ Regarding the use of corporal punishment, Iadicola and Shupe state "violence represses but does not eliminate the original aggression or disobedience. It only drives it under the surface and may actually feed it for the future...[and is not] conducive to generating positive motivation to learn" (2013, 199). Additionally, at SSS I never witnessed girls being caned, which reinforces "core values of masculinity [which] include toughness, ability and willingness to inflict pain and receive it" (Morrell 2001, 149); "[t]he ability to endure punishment is also an important feature of masculinity" (Ibid, 152). Also, See Brereton 2010 for a discussion of corporal punishment in colonial Trinidad.

⁵⁶ These concepts of surveillance, docility and control were analyzed by Foucault 1995.

⁵⁷ Ms. Mungal (a teacher) described the students as "bombs" awaiting detonation (Interview, May 13, 2010).

⁵⁸ Since the student body is overwhelmingly black, there are considerations as well about the impact of this policing and subordinating of 'black masculinities'.

⁵⁹ Observed on June 18, 2013.

⁶⁰ MTS security are different from the role that the two male safety officers play within the school. The latter wear civilian clothing but the MTS personnel wear uniforms and are mostly at the entrance gate.

⁶¹ "leave all of that arguing for the girls!" Observed on June 20, 2013.

⁶² In an interview with a teacher, Ms. Seepersad reported that teachers call students "jackass" and "stupid". (May 19, 2010).

⁶³ The term 'Colonial Masculinities' was employed by Sinha 1995 to describe how the colonizer procured masculinist bona fides via the emasculation of the colonized man.

⁶⁴ See Brereton 2010 for a discussion of how violence in contemporary Trinidad is steeped in the violence of colonization, slavery, and indentureship. Also see Beckles 2011 for a discussion of the intersection of Caribbean masculinity and slavery.

⁶⁵ Synnott posits that "Power: its production, allocation and distribution - its use and abuse – how to get it and how to keep it – has been perhaps the central theme in world history" (2009, 212).

⁶⁶ Krishnaswamy frames this in terms of 'moral imperialism': "Masculinity is not only a foundational notion of modernity, but it is also the cornerstone in the ideology of moral imperialism...The cult of masculinity rationalized imperial rule by equating an aggressive, muscular, chivalric model of manliness with racial, national, cultural, and moral superiority" (2002, 292).

⁶⁷ I make the distinction because, for purposes of my argument, colonial masculinity is too broad a term and can be misread as encompassing the colonial masculinity (albeit a debased one) of slaves and indentured laborers.

⁶⁸ "Control over Caribbean bodies in the eras of slavery and indenture was direct and physical, for instance in techniques such as forced transportation, shackling, flogging, lynching and raping" (Allen 1998, 79).

⁶⁹ See Fanon 1967 for a fascinating analytic disassembly of the processes/apparatuses by which blackness was defined and constructed in contradistinction to whiteness. However, there have been many theorists and researchers who have written about the dialectical relationship between the colonizer and the colonized; that is to say, that although extreme violence was utilized in this relationship, it was still a co-constructed one. Indeed the notion of power disequilibria does not preclude considerations of the notion of co-construction. Memmi states: "In order for the colonizer to be the complete master, it is not enough for him to be so in actual fact, but he must also believe in its legitimacy. In order for that legitimacy to be complete, it is not enough for the colonized to be a slave, he must also accept his role" (1965, 88-89). Also see Kalra 2009, and Sinha 1995 for a discussion of the interdependent constructions of masculinities during colonialism. These are not insignificant considerations: "we need to study the ways in which a stereotype frames and limits the stereotyped as well as the stereotype. Otherwise, we run the risk of reifying the omnipotent image of colonialism by granting it total hegemony over representation" (Krishnaswamy 2002, 295).

⁷⁰ Tengan notes that "Colonized men were often ascribed a heightened "primitive" sexuality which was perceived as a threat to white women" (2002, 243-244).

⁷¹ Davis offers an intersectional analysis of colonial masculinities and black bodies: "This dominant masculinity (referring to colonial hegemonic masculinity) that served to separate the men with the most power (White plantation owners) from the men with the least power (African slaves), relied on elaborate notions of difference and otherness...In Caribbean slave societies, hegemonic masculinity ensured its own power primarily through the control of black bodies. White heterosexual males at the apex of society positioned themselves not only as economically and politically powerful, but also exercised ultimate sexual control over women's bodies and physical control over black male bodies. They rendered black male slaves powerless through violent, physical control and by denying them legitimate access to both black and white women...constructing black men as the ultimate sexual predators...This fetishism of black masculine sexuality served to reinforce black men's otherness. Physical control over black men's bodies was intimately correlated with the denial of black men's minds, the denial of their ability to exercise social and political power...By stripping black men of rational power, black masculinities could simultaneously be feminised and dismissed as infantile" (2006, 27-28). Also see Nurse 2004 where this is also addressed (and Neal 2013, in the U.S. context, for a discussion of how black male bodies are often constructed as criminal and thus in need of policing). Krishnaswamy reminds us that "masculinity was elaborated...through a systematic 'unmanning' of minorities" (2002, 292).

⁷² Allen writes that "Analysts of modernity note that ever since the philosopher Rene Descartes (1596-1650) uttered his famous phrase, "I think, therefore I am", western thought has been riven by the idea of dualism between mind and body. The ascendancy of mind over matter contributed to ideas of superiority of mental work over physical work, of capital over labour, of salaries over wages, of white-collar over blue-collar, or urban over rural, of master over slave. All these permeate the construction of the 'first World' in relation to the 'Third World'. Thus western binarisms are imbued with class and 'race' prejudice" (1998, 79).

⁷³ He writes "Given the asymmetry of power relationships within slavery, indentureship and colonialism, it is not difficult to understand how colonialism would have imposed its patriarchal rule on Caribbean society and economies. Based on a developed and sophisticated European system of patriarchy, colonial rule in the Caribbean inscribed male domination into the culture and political economy of the region...it is not surprising, therefore, that these African and Indian men who were infantilized by a system of slavery and indentureship were unable to exercise autonomy in any sphere of life, particularly with respect to the type or form of family they were allowed to establish. This European male domination of the social relations within Caribbean society laid the foundation for the institutionalization of gender equality in the region. Though excluded from control over resources and from participating in the exercise of power with their European counterparts, African men, and later Indian and Chinese and Portuguese men, were all socialized by, and all ultimately internalized, these patriarchal standards...In short, Caribbean nationalists did not interrogate the patriarchal system that had been bequeathed to them" (2003, 103). Also, see Watkins and Shulman 2008, and DeGruy 2005 for a discussion of the lingering and deep-rooted consequences of slavery and colonialism. See Gregory 2004 for three detailed case studies in which he outlines deep fissures in modern day Afghanistan, Palestine and Iraq and trace their partial genesis to the colonial era. See David 2013 for psychological research done to measure internalized colonialism.

⁷⁴ Directing his analysis specifically to the Barbadian context, (but which can be extrapolated to much of the Anglophone Caribbean) Downes asserts "the aggressive masculinity exercised by old boys of the elite schools of Barbados in protecting imperial and colonial interests did nothing to redress the social, political and economic inequities which faced blacks in the empire...West Indian black men...were (and perhaps still are) far from fully disavowing constructs of masculinity predicated on aggression" (2004, 131).

⁷⁵ Lipman contends that "educational policies are both embedded in a neoliberal social imaginary and are a means to reshape social relations and social identities" (2011, 10).

⁷⁶ Name of nearby 'prestige' school.

⁷⁷ I have discussed these throughout, but I will reiterate them. Some major decisions include 1) as part of *Education For All* efforts, the MoE de-shifted schools (including SSS) that once offered two shifts of schooling for two entirely different batch of students on a daily basis. As a result of this change, SSS received, according to interviews with school administration, deans and teachers, many students who scored zero on the national exams, indicating that they would need extreme remedial assistance so as to be successful in school. The MoE's remedial program, collapsed shortly into its tenure and was not replaced with any additional pedagogical tools for teachers. 2) pilot study of 20 schools that included the transformation of said schools into single-sex schools from co-educational status. This decision was handed down in May/June 2010, without consultation and the schools had to prepare for this massive change by September of that year. In 2013, only three years into the pilot, the MoE (albeit under a different national political party in power) decided to dismantle this program and revert to the prior state of affairs. This was again rendered without any consultation (at least at SSS) and without any rigorous evaluation of the program (and its effects). These decisions, among others, lead SSS to feel like a 'guinea pig' in a social experiment, in which its voice is not respected or sought.

⁷⁸ The move to de-shift schools and offer *Education For All*, saw mixed age cohorts within classrooms at non-prestige schools. At SSS, I encountered in some classes students who were 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16 years old, all within the same class. This often led to a host of issues around violence, including bullying of the younger students by the older students. 'Prestige' schools and their personnel did not have to deal with these types of issues, and personnel at SSS complained that they lacked the resources and skills to amply deal with mixed-aged cohorts.

⁷⁹ This includes the "violence that is derived from the differences in how educational resources are allocated and how this impacts the differences in levels of educational achievement" (Iadicola and Shupe 2013, 205).

⁸⁰ In a study conducted by Morris, he observed that "When constructing masculinity, boys...interpreted pro-school behavior as inconsistent with or irrelevant to manliness and interpreted much anti-academic behavior as indicative of the power of masculinity" (2012, 49-50). At SSS, many young men came to school with empty book bags and when they wrote notes from class lessons, many of these were strewn on the floor by the end of the day.

⁸¹ See Willis 1977 for a terrific, and still relevant, analysis on this very topic.

⁸² As regards the Caribbean, the effects of Structural Adjustment Programs on education and healthcare, and the potential to further destabilize already economically-depressed communities, are perhaps an example of the hegemonic masculinity of global neoliberalism (neo-imperialism).

⁸³ It is in this vein that Archer & Yamashita exhort us to "move away from deficit models in which social and educational problems are located within working-class and minority ethnic cultures and families and where the problems of inner-city boys are understood in terms of their 'deviant' masculinities" (2003, 130).

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Gender Bend and Play a Mas'! Confronting the Gender Binary

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Abstract

Carnival engenders a period of festivity and cultural capital that has survived, arisen out of, and is in response to, years of enslavement, colonization and indentureship. A miscegenation of European cultural expressions and African spiritualities and cultures, Caribbean Carnival has now become a culmination of celebration, song, art, fractured histories, spirituality and in that same breath, debauchery. These various elements that comprise Carnival are critical as they demand of us a rethinking, redefining and repossession of our multiplicitous selves. Participating in Carnival also allows revellers to be confronted with their own perceptions and manifestations of power, gender, sex and sexuality. Carnival permits the remixing and recreating of ourselves since it affords people the opportunity to mask and reveal, of their own volition, the multiple sexual and gender identities and expressions they may embody. This paper will explore Carnival as (i) a site to engage with gender transgression, which I also refer to here as gender bending, (ii) a site to challenge respectability politics and, very briefly as (iii) a site to (re)ground oneself in African traditions and spiritualities.

Keywords: Carnival, culture, mas, power, gender, sex, sexuality, gender bending, African traditions

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Introduction

Though I continue to participate in North American (Ottawa, Montreal and Toronto) Carnivals since leaving Grenada, it has been almost a decade since I last participated in the annual Grenada Carnival celebrations. Compared to its North American counterparts, Caribbean Carnival remains seemingly less commercialized (though it is becoming increasingly commercialized with an increasing presence of for-profit companies) and in some aspects, is able to retain an almost sacred [read spiritual] and historicized element. During my last Carnival celebrations in Grenada in 2004, I remember quite vividly, excitedly participating in J'ouvert¹ and feeding off the energies and the joys that were exuded from the bodies around me. Then, to my surprise and that of other revellers, amidst the 'jump-up', a scuffle began and folks quickly started to disperse. A fight between two young people was about to escalate. Immediately, an elder started shouting that Carnival was not a space for fighting, so they had better take that nonsense elsewhere. Other members of the crowd, feeling emboldened because one person had spoken out, immediately began chastising the two young people until the situation was eventually quelled. This memory brought me back to what I consider to be a sacred, untouchable yet simultaneously raunchy, and communally (though not necessarily legal) self-governed space that is Carnival — take that fighting nonsense someplace else!

To complement and expand on the perspectives that my lived experiences contribute to this paper and to fill in any possible gaps that my physical disconnect from the annual Carnival celebrations in Grenada may create, I interviewed four young Grenadians aged between 25 and 30. To preserve anonymity, aliases will be used. The only male-identified person, whom I will refer to as Ron, currently lives in Grenada and has spent a large majority of his adult life in the region. The other three interviewees, who are all female-identified, were also born and raised in Grenada and left the island in their late teens or early twenties but return to the island, on average, at least once a year.

Throughout this paper, these three women will be referred to as Michelle, Allison and Rhonda. The interviewees were asked a series of seven questions that can be found in the appendix to this paper.

The annual Grenada Carnival comprises a few key events: Ole Mas, the Dimanche Gras Show, Panorama, the National Queen Show, Soca Monarch, J'ouvert, Monday Night Mas, the Pageant Mas and the Parade of the Bands. Ole Mas is an annual theatrical show whereby participants perform and engage in satire directed at local leaders, politicians and anyone who may have been involved in a national or more localized scandal. Usually accompanying the participants' vivid costumes are pieces of cardboard with text to further explain the significance and context of the costume with questions or comments usually intended to further prompt audience engagement. The Dimanche Gras Show is the annual calypso competition where artists perform their songs, as they vie for the title of Dimanche Gras Queen and King. The Soca Monarch competition, now known as that of the Groovy and Soca Monarch, is quite similar to the Dimanche Gras competition. Panorama, as its name suggests, is the annual steel pan competition, while the National Queen Show is the annual pageant that in the past comprised female competitors from each of the seven parishes. However, in 2014, the show was changed to reflect seven themes under the new "Pure Grenada" tourist brand for the island's tourist industry. J'ouvert, Monday Night Mas, the Pageant Mas and the Parade of the Bands usually occur over the course of the week directly preceding the final two-day 'jump-up'². J'ouvert opens the two-day 'jump-up' during the wee hours of Monday morning with Monday Night Mas the following evening and the Parade of the Bands beginning Monday afternoon with the major parade occurring on the Tuesday afternoon.

From the ancestral Shortknee³ to J'ouvert, Carnival in many ways requires a masking ritual that includes facial masks and the painting of one's partial or entire body. In her interview, Rhonda attributed the wearing of masks to Grenadians' African and French colonial histories (personal interview, 16 July 2014). The events listed above are more than festive celebrations; they also

create communal identifiers among a group of people and are a central aspect of nation-state formation and survival. Locals play into the Western gaze, thus reaping profits for the state by allowing governments to capitalize on the presence of tourists mesmerized by the erotic colonized body (Kempadoo 2009 King 2011). In some ways, however, this playing into the Western gaze can also become a means for locals to talk back and secure some form of agency throughout the process. Similar to Mikhail Bakhtin's analysis on Carnival and the carnivalesque, Carnival is a space imbued with freedom, excess and wisdom where alternative identities, behaviours and expressions can flourish and engage in different forms of resistance and existence (Bakhtin 1984).

This paper argues that the annual celebrations of Carnival in the Caribbean, particularly in Grenada, provide a state-sanctioned occasion to gender bend and embrace one's individual and communal multiplicitous⁴ self. In particular, Carnival challenges the present-day respectability politics⁵ that exists within the Caribbean by encouraging, i.e. not explicitly criminalizing, non-hegemonic masculinities, femininities and sexualities. Carnival acts as a site where state-imposed binaries around sex, sexuality and gender can and are confronted with explicit expressions of performativity and gender transgression.

Gender, Gender Bending and Gender Transgression in the Context of Coloniality and Carnival

When asked what came to mind when they thought of **gender**, gendered expectations and performance in the context of Carnival, all of the interviewees highlighted Ole Mas and J'ouvert as examples where gender transgression and performance play out. During Ole Mas and J'ouvert, both male-identified and female-identified, but particularly the former, wear clothing that would typically be associated with another (usually within a heteronormative, cis-gendered⁶ binary) sex. Michelle was the only person who underlined the heightened sexualisation of women during Carnival that may simultaneously occur with

gender bending and transgression (personal interview, 18 July 2014). She stated that women are expected to wear skimpy and close-to-naked attire, whereas men are not expected to do so. As Michelle noted, however, at the same time that these gendered expectations are enforced, they are also challenged through music by some of the soca and calypso artists, e.g. Alison Hinds' 'Roll it Gyal' — an empowering song where the artist encourages women to know themselves and enforce their own personal boundaries (personal interview, 18 July 2014).

The terms gender bend and gender transgression may not immediately register with many in the Caribbean, particularly with those residing in Grenada. In the context of Grenada, terms such as *zami*⁷ and *buller man*⁸ may be more familiar when thinking about other (read non-conforming) sexualities and expressions of gender and intimacy; they not only signal gender transgression in terms of performativity, but are also used to refer to manifestations of sexual attraction and preference (though the two are not mutually exclusive). *Zami* and *buller man* are identities imposed onto bodies of people who fall outside of the boundaries of heteronormativity. Wesley Crichtlow (2004) urges us to use indigenous terms situated within a Caribbean context to better understand the interplay between racial, gender and sexual identities (32-33). Therefore, where necessary, these terms will be used to better contextualize and situate my analyses.

The social norms and boxes that one has to remain within, in order not to be labelled as 'queer' (acknowledging that queer is not necessarily a term used in the Caribbean) or, as Grenadians would say, 'funny', becomes less relevant during Carnival as revellers are able to mask or pretend to exist within the confines of a mask. Grenadian scholar Caldwell Taylor, in discussing the significance of Carnival on the Grenadian website *Big Drum Nation*, quotes C.L.R. James: "Carnival is the rule of the subconscious. A time when, among things, we don masks to portray our inner lives—our fears, our desires, our defects: Carnival is both confession and confessional; it is rebellion and

submission" (James 1959). The wearing of the masks, figuratively and literally, affords the reveller an anonymity that can usually be translated into spaces that afford some level, if only transitory, of safety and reduced vulnerability.

Throughout this paper, the term 'gender bend' will be used to refer to the active transgression of gender roles and expectations as a means of decolonizing and deconstructing the heterosexist gender binary (Lugones 2007). The annual Caribbean celebrations of Carnival allow for a space for children and adults to play into, and experience a remix of gender, sex and sexualities that has been largely defined by the ongoing colonial process. Carnival celebrations can be an important space to critically, honestly, and playfully engage in liberatory sexual politics within the context of our lived experiences. Carnival, in a sense, provides a (state-) sanctioned occasion to gender bend and, in particular, to embrace non-hegemonic, fluid masculinities and femininities. Male-identified people proudly choose to wear what would be considered female-identified and/or androgynous-type clothing and effeminately dance to the rhythms of soca and calypso, though as noted in the interview with Ron, this satirical behaviour by individuals is not intended to mock those who are gender non-conforming, but rather meant to mock the system that continues to keep them oppressed (personal interview, 18 July 2014). During Carnival, men dressed in female attire may not, in that moment, be seen as buller men but merely 'regular' men enjoying the festivities. Female-identified people perform what would typically be considered cis-gendered, heterosexist male-identified roles as they pursue women and take on certain masculine roles. Gender and sexuality become fluid in a space that is governed by temporal lawlessness and freedom.

Sexualities and sexual expressions will be used broadly to refer to one's identification with pleasure, attraction, and the psychological and ontological interaction with those thoughts and feelings, as well as the corporeal embodiment of thoughts and desires. Such manifestations are rendered visible in the choice of clothing, one's mannerisms, choice of intimate partner(s), and

the types of intimate relationships that one engages with. Sexualities and sexual expressions can further be manifested in the general expressions of individuality and personality. In Gloria Wekker's (2006) account of Mati work done in Suriname, it becomes clear that people who desire others of the same sex or gender may instead view this desire as behavioural as opposed to being part of their identity⁹. For example, when Wekker asks Juliette, a woman who engages in Mati work, whether or not she was a Mati, Juliette impatiently and with annoyance answers, "'Ma di m'e srib' nanga umasma, dan m'e mati'"/But since I am sleeping with women, then I mati" (13). Wekker's use of the verb *na*/to be and the noun *mati* implied that she was imposing an identity onto Juliette, whereas Juliette chose to view her choices as not tied to an identity but more so associated with her behaviour and actions. Her sexuality was fluid and was not the end-all of who she was. As Wekker noted, there was a tension between identity versus activity where the former belongs to a "dominant Euro-American" space and the latter refers to a "working class Afro-Surinamese model of how sexual subjectivity is envisioned" (12-13).

In spite of Carnival acting as a space to gender bend, it also serves as a space to re-entrench colonial heterosexist gender categories. Allison recounts an incident where, during J'ouvert, she witnessed a Jab parading around with a woman chained to him which to her [Allison] "... could be seen as a way of showing 'male control' over his female property'" (personal interview, 17 July 2014). This powerful rendition of male-female interactions re-entrenches the narrative of women's bodies as [lifeless] property and again removes any agency that they may have. It is also a violent display of heterosexist masculinity and femininity that locks both parties into a rigid expectation of their relationship that is motivated and maintained by brute force, cruelty and power imbalances. A woman-identified person choosing to act 'manly' is still performed within heterosexist ideals of masculinity, i.e. the man occupying a space of sexual prowess and the woman merely the receiving object.

It is important not to appear as romanticizing Carnival. With lawlessness

comes the possibility of boundaries not being heard and respected, which may lead to sexualized violence, harassment and gender-based violence. Carnival can be a very unsafe space and in so many ways, does promote the erasure of personal boundaries. In order to address this violence, the Grenadian public's broad acceptance of the colonial gender binary system and the conceptualization of gender, sex and sexualities within a heterosexist, dimorphic framework needs to be challenged. The dual and oppositional categorization of gender, expressed as either male or female, carries with it entrenched asymmetrical power relations. These cis-gendered ideologies pervade the everyday ideals, traditions, perceptions and social attitudes regarding gender, gendered practices and sexuality in Grenada, inadvertently endorsing numerous forms of violence. This colonial gender binary system also inherently excludes gender non-conforming people and intersex people who fall within neither the heterosexist male or female categories.

Whereas gender bending can be seen as one form of resisting colonial ideals of gender and sex, Grenada has also challenged its colonial history in a myriad of other forms. From the uprising of workers, then led by Eric Gairy and that led to Grenada receiving independence in 1974, to the overthrow of the Eric Gairy government in 1979¹⁰, Grenadians have always resisted. The Grenada Revolution officially started in 1979 with the People's Revolutionary Government (PRG) coming to power. Those involved challenged the multiple faces of colonialism, in terms of the economic, the social, the political and the cultural. One of the core tenets of the Revolution was the narrative of internationalism and a linking with global struggles for true independence and liberation. This core tenet was critical in the reshaping of Grenadian nationalism. In his opening address to the First International Conference in Solidarity with Grenada, held on the island 23–25 November 1981, Maurice Bishop states as follows:

[The] conference manifests our [Grenadians'] continuing strict adherence to international principles. We have always scrupulously avoided viewing our struggle, our revolutionary process, from a narrow nationalist perspective. We have long understood that the

world revolutionary process, the struggle of oppressed mankind everywhere, is one and indivisible. Thus, this International Solidarity Conference holds grave importance as it bears testimony to our commitment to the notable concept of internationalism (PRG Speeches 1982, 9).

Though Bishop and other PRG freedom fighters did not use terms such as coloniality to explain why Grenadians chose to link their struggles to global struggles, this linking clearly remained an important part of their analysis and political actions. There was a recognition that coloniality did not only manifest itself in the ways it valued our bodies and minds as labour-producing machinery, but also in the ways in which we saw ourselves and our global perspectives. Hence, coloniality also represented our longstanding crisis of epistemological, cultural, economic, and political dependence (PRG Speeches 1982). Coloniality constitutes and is constitutive of the hegemonic mind, the white, or masculinist, or heterosexist, or national chauvinist (Lugones 2007, 2010). Coloniality's hegemonic power and grasp over our labour, our lands, our sexualities and governance structures took the form of the "nation-state, capitalism, the nuclear family, and eurocentrism" (Martinot 2011, Introduction). The Grenada Revolution attempted to challenge the coloniality of our nation and, more so, of ourselves. This raises the question: What did gender and sexual expressions look like during those four Revolutionary years? Did Carnival exist and what form did it take? These may not have looked any different compared to contemporary Carnival celebrations, but if the decolonizing project was so deeply embedded within the political and everyday interpersonal landscape, then could there not be a possibility that sexuality and gender expression were also part of that decolonizing process?

Keja L.Valens, in *Desire Between Women in Caribbean Literature* (2013), covers one of the main characters, Mayotte, who embodies impressions of gender transgression and sexual expression:

During Carnival, Mayotte gives up the play of gender traits and

roles that she relished in her rural childhood for a straightforward set of reversals that rely on a stable set of binary opposites: “Many were, like me, transvestites for the night. I had, in fact, gotten myself a man’s costume...Soon I noticed that a masked woman was following me. I looked back occasionally and found with pleasure that she was still there...” She had explained her own manly costume as what girls wore, not an expression of gender bending but of gender conforming (126).

The above excerpt highlights the hidden desires and associated shame that comes with expressing one’s non-conforming gender, sexual identity and desires. Carnival is temporal, therefore, even if one feels more comfort and safety in challenging heteronormativity during the festivities, those feelings of safety and comfort are not guaranteed beyond the two or three day highlights. The name-calling and shunning that happens all-year round has already become so embedded within one’s skin, bones and psyche that it becomes difficult, if not impossible, to fully feel safe.

...years of socialization girl wear pink boy wear blue
 boy play sport girl play house girl get barbie boy
 get fire-truck gendah is a social construct wi tell
 har she she musn’t climb tree we tell him seh dry
 him eye we tell har seh fi close har legs wi tell him
 seh boys don’t cry we tell har seh fi please har
 man wi tell him oomaan deh deh fi please man
 gendah bendah schooling pretendahs unlearning
 british colonizashun gendah bendah urging di
 sisters redefine your wombanist position... (Anitfrika 2011)

The above *Gendah Bendah (remix)* lyrics by Jamaican storyteller d’bi young on her 333 album captures what this paper intends by the term gender bend. As d’bi so creatively and critically puts it, this process of gender bending is a necessary part of the decolonizing exercise that sometimes occurs apart from a deeper interaction with colonized gender and sexual identities.

The Carnival celebrations in the Caribbean present an opportunity for persons to move through and occupy different worlds (Lugones 2007, 2010) that blur the lines of gender, sex, sexuality and agency. This fluidity and in many ways freedom — that is central to Carnival — regulates at the same time that it restricts, gender bending and the ability of persons to step outside of the heterosexist gender binary without drawing too much attention to their individual self. Therefore, in a society where homophobia and transphobia is so prevalent, Carnival allows for a less attention-grabbing way for men to play around with their masculinities, for women to push the boundaries of femininity and for gender non-conforming people to [almost] embrace their full selves, if only temporarily. The colonial order attempted to disfigure and mutilate sexuality and desire in the Caribbean. However, Carnival has been able to survive “by withstanding and incorporating [colonial] influences, from within and without, above and below, by adapting the change without changing completely” (Valens 2013, 61).

To mask oneself or to participate in a public exercise of masking that differentiates one's everyday individual self is to intentionally, though not directly, participate in a cultural aesthetic, to express and embrace one's multitude of characters while, at the same time, to survive. The survival aspect is important, as the persistent regulation and policing of bodies and sexualities is one of the most influential offsprings of colonialism and the miscegenation between the law and religion in the English-speaking Caribbean (Alexander 1994; King 2011). This is, partially, what Carnival represents for many Caribbean people. Thus, in many ways it conceals and reveals our inner and outward femininities, masculinities, sexualities and expressions that challenge Western religions but also lay us open to being judged by those very institutions (Tamale 2011; Alexander 2005).

Respectability Politics and Carnival

Generally speaking, the social organizational structure within the English-speaking Caribbean, at least in Grenada, is largely based on respectability and reputational politics that are very much embedded within a colonial history (Wilson 1973; King 2011; Murray 2009). Respectability politics deeply affects how people see themselves and how they are perceived by others and society. It becomes worrisome as these skewed and, many times, imposed views that often go unchallenged, ignore our historical realities allowing for Black men's bodies to be automatically considered as physical and sexual threats and Black women's bodies as unsanctioned hosts for sexual lasciviousness (King 2011). They also limit the imaginations and possibilities through which we can express ourselves.

In his account of his childhood days during Carnival, Grenadian M. Martin Lewis recalls of Carnival, that it

...was like a "people's mas." It had no standards; or rather that all standards could be broken; any standard. No one held you to anything. Lazy or fit you made it up as you went along. No tradition was sacred with Jab; every year was a new year. Fat, skinny, rich, poor all played Jab. Jab was the nearest thing to a classless society and for those two days I relished in it. (Lewis 2012).

Though Lewis is referring specifically to Jab Jab (J'ouvert), these thoughts and feelings of freedom and, in many ways, acceptance, regardless of one's social status, class, gender and race, can be broadly applied to Carnival and thus can also be used to support gendered and sexual freedoms as well.

Samuel Kinser (1999) argues that Carnival's origins in mediaeval times lay bare four aspects — the ecological, the social, the metaphysical and the moral (45). The ecological had to do with the geographical location of the wild people — usually a mysterious, giant figure who is typically in the nude, hairy

and alone. The wild people played a frightening, frolicksome and delightful role in mediaeval Carnival (43). The social had to do with the social and living arrangements of the wild people who lived either alone or in isolated families and thus had “no settled abode and consequently no societies, laws, or the courtly and civil manners accompanying such institutions” (45). The metaphysical had to do with the pagan lifestyles of the wild people. This paganist lifestyle allowed the wild people to live excessively sensuous lives that were “without true — i.e., Christian — spiritual life; hence they are subject to the devil's temptations, and often yield to diabolic prompting” (45). Finally, the moral refers to the irrational and disorderly behaviour and mannerisms of the wild people as a result of their lives and societies being devoid of ecological, social and metaphysical groundings.

These four aspects of mediaeval Carnival can be identified in current day Grenadian Carnival celebrations. Whereas many of the people participating may not want to be referred to as wild people, they do occasionally inhabit bodies of transgression. Throughout Carnival celebrations, there is a wandering, a type of loitering almost, that occurs as people *chip-chip*¹¹ down the streets to the sounds of jab-jab songs and soca, with little or no care in the world. As though without a home, the Carnival revellers embody what Kinser identifies as the wild people. Regarding the social, as already mentioned, Carnival acts as a space for lawlessness. Though state-sanctioned, the actions and bodies that would typically and immediately be labelled as criminal and immoral are allowed limited freedoms within the context of Carnival. Reflecting on this triggered a memory of myself chipping down the road during J'ouvert one morning, absolutely enjoying the dance I was having with this ‘masked’ stranger — masked because everyone at the time was either covered in tar or blue paint. It was not until the sun had risen and I got a proper glimpse of my very committed dance partner that I realized that he was a well-known homeless person. To my surprise, this homeless person who is a Grenadian national, yet is not regularly afforded the benefits and rights of being a citizen as a result of him being homeless (Alexander 1994), had traversed the boundaries of class, status

and citizenship and for an hour or so was 'human' in my eyes. This led me to engage in a self-reflective practice that forced me to confront my own biases, perceptions and the social and economic spaces that I occupied and how I was complicit in this man's ongoing lived experience of oppression and isolation. Carnival temporarily placed us both on an equal-level playing field.

The metaphysical aspect of Carnival is what intrigues me the most as I truly envision Carnival as a space for African spiritual awakening that I will discuss in further detail. Whereas Kinser's use of the metaphysical is counter to Christianity and, therefore, in some ways, vulnerable to the Devil's temptations, I view this resistance to Christianity as an opportunity to reinsert African spiritualities that were stripped or minimized during colonization.

Regarding the lawlessness aspect of Carnival, apart from the behaviour of Carnival revellers, there is also the nature of the songs used throughout Carnival. One song that stood out in 2012 for its violent lyrics is '*Kick In She Back Door*' by veteran Antiguan band Burning Flames. Here is an excerpt of the lyrics of this song:

[woman screaming]

[man mocking woman's voice "murder murder, ah kill he gine kill me"]

If she front door lock and you can't get in

And she bathroom window lock

And you can't get in

And she bedroom window lock

And you can't get in

And she kitchen window lock

And you can't get in

What to do?

Kick in she back door

Kick in she back door

What ah mean?

Kick um in
And she bawling murder
[more screaming]
I don't really know bout you
But I know just what to do
When a woman batten down she house
Make up she mind to keep you out
You push your key to find it jam
And it in [something] in you hand
So the solution to get inside
Cause she lock down she house so tight
Whether rain or shine
Morning, noon or night
Is the only way to win this fight

Chorus

[more screaming: "Call the police, come of mi yard, you too damn wicked"]

Women does mek things real hard
Especially when they get mad
No matter how hard you try
No easy way to slip inside
So the solution to get inside
Cause she lock down she house so tight
Whether rain or sun
Morning, noon or night
Is the only way to win this fight.

(Borrowed from Code Red for Gender Justice)

The song above illustrates an escalation and extreme of the type of lawlessness that is very present throughout Carnival. This song is violent. It is true that calypso and soca have had a history of including political commentary¹², humour and in many ways debauchery. However, instead of creating and stimulating

movement building, songs like the one above help to ensure that Carnival remains a space where abuse and violence are justified.

Issues of safety are a real concern during the annual Carnival celebrations as illustrated in the song lyrics above and as highlighted in some of the answers provided by the young people I interviewed. When asked what safety meant to them in the context of Carnival, three of the four interviewees talked about sexual assault, harassment, and substance abuse (mainly alcohol related) as having a very real and increasing presence in Carnival (personal interviews, July 2014). One interviewee also highlighted the prevalence of road accidents during Carnival as a result of excessive drinking (personal interview, 18 July 2014). Interestingly enough, the one interviewee who did not list safety as being an issue during Carnival was the sole male-identified person Ron, which I would argue might speak to the level of gender normalization and internalization that people, regardless of gender, embody.

Rhonda stated “safety is an issue during carnival festivities mainly because the focus of Carnival and ‘playing mas’ has shifted from being a form of cultural expression and ‘revelling’ to “drinking as much as possible” (personal interview, 16 July 2014). Therefore, as much as this paper argues for the possible usefulness in freedom and lawlessness present in Carnival, that freedom cannot be absolute, as safety for all bodies, regardless of gender and sexuality, needs to remain a critical part of those discussions.

African Traditions and Spirituality

It is important to examine the ways in which non-heterosexual identities and sexualities are repressed, threatened and erased when exploring masculinities within the context of Carnival and the ongoing colonial project, as non-heterosexual relations generally represent a threat to dominant and hegemonic identities and sexualities on an everyday basis. In the

groundbreaking book, *African Sexualities*, Kopano Ratele examined male sexualities and masculinities in post-colonial Africa:

The mere existence of male-to-male African sexuality makes those who swing that way objects of fear and hate within the dominant sexual system. Males who like penises rather than vaginas are made into outlaws. Where it does not attract overt loathing and phobia, the sexual love of a man for other men almost always makes the man a marginal figure, an outsider within those societies in which patriarchal heterosexual masculinity is normative. Men who love other men end up as objects of homophobic rage because such love disturbs a cornerstone of patriarchal heterosexual power in that it shows that men are not of one mind and feeling when it comes to sexuality. Men who eroticise men instead of women engender a potential crisis in ruling ideas of true masculinity (p. 408 Ratele 2011, citing Edwards 2005).

Having its roots in African cultures and expressions, Carnival can also be said to mirror the fluid gender identities that explicitly existed in some parts of pre-colonial Africa (see Oyewumi 1997; Tamale 2011) and that in many ways, continues to exist on the continent and in many spaces in the Caribbean. According to the work done by Global South feminist Oyeronke Oyewumi, in pre-colonial Nigeria, the imposition of a eurocentric gender system on Yoruba society encompassed the subordination of females in every aspect of gender and life but was not, in fact, an organizing principle in pre-colonial Yoruba society (Lugones 2007, 2010). In Yoruba society, Oyewumi argues, intersexed people did occupy a location within society that was respected and deemed legitimate. Though the terms *obinrin* and *okunrin* have been mistranslated to refer to females and males, respectively, these terms were neither binarily opposed nor hierarchical (Lugones 2007, 2010). During Haiti's Kanaval celebrations, men embody female deities such as *Lasiren* as depicted in Leah Gordon's *Kanaval: Vodou, Politics and Revolution on the Streets of Haiti* exhibit. In the *Madamn Lasiren* segment, 59-year-old Andre Farmer speaks about how

he prepares to be embodied by the spirit of Lasiren, the spirit that he has dreamt about many times and whom his grandmother, father and mother all served (Gordon 2014). An example of African spirituality thriving in Carnival spaces is that of the Oludum bloco Afro in Bahia, Brazil, which celebrated thirty-five years of retaining its African roots on 25 April 2014 — African Liberation Day. The Oludum Band originated out of the Bloco Afro Olodum, founded on 25 April 1979, whose goal was to ensure that Black Bahians were able to participate in Carnival as a group and in an organized fashion (Duarte 2011). The Afro Oludum Band did not just participate in Carnival, they also fought social discrimination and helped to stimulate the self-esteem and self-worth of Afro-Brazilians (Duarte 2011) who faced multiple barriers simply because they were of African descent.

A Carnival band that is even more grounded in African roots and spirituality than the Brazilian Bloco Afro Olodum is the *Ile Aiye* in Brazil. Brazil is an important nation to examine when researching the role of colonization, as it received the highest number of enslaved African people during the Transatlantic Slave Trade, making its geopolitical location and the current state of Black people there deserving of critical attention. *Ile Aiye* is the first Black organization in Brazil, born in *Curuzu Liberdade* Freedom Neighbourhood, where the largest populations of African Brazilians live (Crook 2005). Besides having a strong Carnival presence, *Ile Aiye* honours African people and Black uprisings in Brazil through song, political actions, education and community projects in order to preserve and maintain Africa-Brazil (*Ile Aiye* official website).

The examples of *Ile Aiye* and the Afro Olodum Band remind us of the possibilities of changing the landscape of current Carnival celebrations that are becoming continuously overshadowed by corporate and imperial interests. From the Big Drum¹³ in Carriacou to the J'ouvert and Shortknee on the main island of Grenada, there is a real possibility to reinsert Africa into Carnival and return Carnival to its roots of resistance and community building. From the inclusion of drums and drumming circles to the introduction of an educational aspect tied to the costumes by sharing their histories, Carnival can become

more than a “jump up, drink rum and dance” type of festival. It can be a festival of awakening, community, movement and jubilee.

The interviewees were asked if there were any segments within Carnival that reminded them of African tradition and/or spirituality, to which they all answered yes. They said that J'ouvert and the drumming and chanting associated with Jab were clear indications of a continuing presence of Africanisms (personal interviews). For Ron, the corporeal expressions of African spirituality in Carnival were most evident in J'ouvert. He stated the following:

J'ouvert reminds me a lot of African spirituality. I was having a recent conversation with a friend who I was telling that J'ouvert is about shango. Dirty with old oil, chanting, behind a fat bumper while the music truck boom rattles your bones with jab jab soca with blood and iron seeping through the beat — that's pure shango. It's the reason some Christians say J'ouvert is demonic, though they can't necessarily explain it like I did. That's the way they vilify forms of African spirituality with their colonial gaze. It's spiritual, I love revelling in that shango energy (personal interview)

Unfortunately, a more detailed conversation on Carnival as a site for a (re)grounding in African traditions and spirituality is critical and not adequately addressed in this paper. I did, however, still want to flag the need to continue these conversations, given the increasing commercialization of Carnival and the rapid departure from its traditional beginnings.

Conclusion

In contemporary Grenada, systems of power that were once white, colonial, and dominant are now viewed as the benefits, sacrifices, and fruits of independence, development, and modernity. Slavery and the official existence

of a dominant colonial administration may have come to an end. However, the effects of colonial power continue to be manifested in the uncritical exercise of power by the nation-state, the regulation of our bodies and sexualities and our internalization of heterosexist notions of identity, gender, sex and sexuality.

Particularly in colonial nation states, as in many English-speaking Caribbean islands, where homophobia remains a central tenet of the laws, social norms and societal ideologies, men are afforded the 'safety' of dressing up, acting out and challenging hegemonic masculinity *in the name of mas*'. To assume general safety and acceptance for all non-heterosexual people during Carnival, however, would be irresponsible. This episodic display of gender bending and revelry ultimately challenges the liminality associated with Carnival and forces one to interrogate the possibility of extending this embodiment of reformed masculinities and femininities beyond the colourful walls and fabric of Carnival. In addition, it poses the question of whether Caribbean peoples' interaction with masking during Carnival is an attempt to reconstruct new sexualities, or a return to sexualities that are not dichotomous? Or is it merely performative and in some ways a temporary and superficial engagement with non-hegemonic sexualities?

Can Carnival be actualized as a space to challenge these manifestations of colonized sexualities or is it merely a display of performances exercised for spectators? In Linden Lewis' analysis of the character Aldrick in Earl Lovelace's *The Dance of the Dragon*, Lewis helped to illustrate the purpose of Aldrick's mask during Carnival which was an extension of his identity as a man: it served as the construction and reconstruction of his masculine identity (Lewis 1998). The masking during Carnival represents an uninhibited expression of one's gender, sex, sexuality and desire. It serves as a manifestation of that freedom that is not looked upon with such judgmental eyes and quiet whispers as would be the case if it were not Carnival. Therefore, the relationship with hegemonic masculinity that is heterosexist, that presumes (hetero) sexual prowess,

physicality and violence can be challenged within Carnival, but the challenging needs to extend beyond that.

Carnival can also be a space for political mobilization. King (2011) does an excellent job of examining the role of jamettes in Carnival and public spaces and how that engenders political action, resistance and the rise of new sexualities. King notes that the same women who were labelled and dismissed as jamettes were the same women engaged in direct political action in Trinidad (219-220). Carnival was one of those few times where the poor were allowed to engage in public festivities, even to make a parody of the elite, and so these very jamette women capitalized on the opportunity to shed light on the structural barriers that they and others in their communities faced.

Recently, there has been public outcry and shaming over what is, seemingly, a recent growth and imposition of non-heterosexual forms of interpersonal relations and intimacies that have been labelled as foreign to the populations. This outcry is, therefore, automatically accompanied by a simultaneous re-rooting of the 'good old Christian ways' that are supposedly central tenets of Caribbean civic and cultural life. Somehow, non-heterosexuality is always only, and inherently a Western ideal and somehow counter to what it means to be Black and/or African — this false and problematic assumption demands a further conversation.

When asked about the potential risks of the increasing commercialization of Carnival, the answers from the interviewees illustrated that some were more amenable to the commercialization of Carnival than others. Some felt that it did not threaten the authenticity of the events and that it could potentially benefit the entire Grenadian economy, whereas others, particularly Ron, were of the mind that increasing commercialization meant greater restrictions and possibly heightened safety. But Ron had this to say, "the increasing commercialization of Carnival is slowly effacing all these elements [gender expectations, roles, safety, governance (be it state or self-governance) and African origins] except that it

makes Carnival a bit safer. I prefer the unsafeness if it means it's more grass roots though" (personal interview, 18 July 2014).

Carnival continues to grow and garner increased attention and participation from across the globe, and with this growth comes a threat to the fundamental and ancestral principles that were part of carnival's inception. With the increasing corporatization and commercialization of carnival celebrations, its ability to continue evolving into a liberatory, anti-colonial, and communal space lessens, leaving little room for transformative, anti-capitalist interactions with gender bending, gender, sex, sexual agencies and freedoms. Similar to the ways that tourism departments and governments play into the Western desire to experience the exotic Caribbean with its readily available lovers (Kempadoo 2009), so too Carnival is being sold as an exotic, sex-filled and boundaryless opportunity for Westerners to enjoy. Not only are the revellers allowed to be lawless but so too the onlookers. This is not to minimize the agency of people who may choose to engage in different interactions such as sex work. Rather, the concern here is what the institutionalizing of Carnival as a commodity may do to the traditional and community-building aspect of it and how it may re-entrench asymmetrical power relations. As we grow wary of the recolonizing impacts on our carnival celebrations, may we continue to resist and take ownership over these sacred spaces as they hold the prospect of becoming spaces for sexual and gender revolutions that ensure the valuing of lives and experiences, regardless of where one falls on the gender, class and sex spectrum. As with the Lanse Kod in Haiti's Kanaval (Gordon Kanaval Exhibit 2014), where they carry cords (pieces of rope) to accompany their intentionally darkened skin and horn-covered heads, may we break free of the cords and chains that represent ongoing enslavement, of the corporeal and mental kind, and may our Carnival traditions carry similar revolutionary spirits as evidenced with the Ile Aiye in Brazil.

¹ The J'ouvert celebrations begin around 5am on the Monday morning of the two-day Carnival celebrations after Dimanche Gras. Revellers blackened with tar, stale molasses, grease or mud fill the streets wearing scant clothing and horned helmets with the intention of scaring onlooking masqueraders.

² The final days of festivities on the streets.

³ "The word "Shortknee" was coined back in the 1920s at a time when "Creole English" was supplanting French Patois as the language of the Grenadian folk; prior to the 1920s the mas (masque) was known as "Grenade Pierrot". The Pierrot, a clown, was one of the more colourful items in the cultural *portmanteau* brought to Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique by the French, who ruled the islands from 1650 to 1763 and again from 1779 to 1783.

The word Shortknee is a clear reference to the mas's knee breeches (trousers extending down to or just below the knee) which, like its bodice, are made of brightly coloured cotton fabric. The Shortknee's bodice is fitted with overlong bag sleeves and these are fastened at the wrists. The front and back of the bodice are "dressed up" with tiny mirrors. Though decorative in part, these mirrors function essentially as talismans, for they "protect" the wearer by "reflecting" his enemies. Spicemas Grenada Official website.

⁴ As borrowed from Gloria Wekker's discussion of the Winti religion and the Mati women of Suriname.

⁵ See Wilson, 1973; King, 2011; Murray, 2009.

⁶ Cis-gendered refers to when a person identifies with the biological sex they were assigned at birth.

⁷ Lorde, 1982; Alexander, 2005, p. 49

⁸ See Crichlow, 2004 in *Interrogating Caribbean Masculinities* (ed by Rhoda Reddock), for a detailed and analytical take on the term buller man and batty bwoys.

⁹ Kamala Kempadoo, 2009, also discusses this activity versus identity narrative when she explores the interplay of sex, sexuality and tourism in the Caribbean.

¹⁰ See Maurice Bishop Speaks, 1983, edited by Bruce Marcus and Michael Taber.

¹¹ This refers to the movement and pace of people's feet as they dance along the streets.

¹² See Grenadian calypsonians Black Wizard and Ajamu and Grenadian-Trinidadian The Might Sparrow.

¹³ The Big Drum is a social and religious ritual that has been sustained on the island of Carriacou since enslavement and the arrival of the Cromanti people. Through the Big Drum circles, elders and community members share knowledge of their traditions, lineages and folklore.

Appendix

1. When thinking about gender, gendered expectations and performance, what are some of the thoughts and examples that come to your mind in the context of Carnival?
2. Do you think that your examples mentioned in answer 1 carry any significance to you and, perhaps, the broader Grenadian community?
3. When you think about safety and Carnival, what comes to your mind?
4. Do you see Carnival as more of a self-governed space or more so as a state-sanctioned set of events?
5. How do you think we can address issues of safety during Carnival?
6. Do any aspects of Carnival remind you of general African traditions and/or spirituality?
7. Do you think that the increasing commercialization of carnival places any of the issues listed before, i.e. gender expectations, roles, safety, governance (be it state or self-governance) and African origins, at risk?

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Moving Dancehall Off the Island: Female Sexuality and Club Culture in Toronto

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Abstract

While there has been an exciting growth in scholarship on dancehall culture, primarily in the fields of cultural and literary studies as they relate to Jamaica, more attention needs to be given to its configuration in other geographical locations and other popular culture arenas. This article explores dancehall culture from a geographic site, in Toronto, which, despite its large Caribbean population, is often a mere footnote in larger diasporic studies. Moving beyond the proclivity of viewing dancehall culture and music from a purely patriarchal misogynistic viewpoint, the article focuses on the redemptive and empowering possibilities that this popular Black expressive form holds. It underscores how dancehall culture and music challenge hegemonic scripts predicated on stereotypes of Black women's sexuality. Despite the contradictions inherent in the music and the performance of female artists such as Lady Saw and Tanya Stephens, dancehall culture evokes women as active agents who are able to articulate their sexual desires.

Keywords: Sexuality, dancehall music, Black/Caribbean women, dance

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Dedication

This article is dedicated to KaosKrew (especially Philip Cole), Slim & Trim (Michael Banfield and Leslie Corion) DJ's Quincy, Bobby B, Mark Anthony, Mike Gibbs, Wayne; my brother DJ Extacy (Dwayne Reynolds), Eddie Williams, Andy Coward, the late Michael Charles and Dorian Major (RIP) and the rest of the Tdot promoters. Thanks for the wonderful memories!

Introduction

For the majority of Caribbean people, migration remains the primary route to economic mobility. Following the Second World War, Caribbean migrants, some of whom were recruited, left *en masse* for Britain where they helped to alleviate the labour shortage and rebuild that country. As British subjects, Caribbean people had the legal right to migrate and settle there. Transformations in US immigration policies with the Hart-Celler Immigration Bill in 1965, and Canada in 1962 and 1967, coupled with the need for semi-skilled and skilled labour, led to a flow of Caribbean migrants, mainly to New York and Toronto. The largest number of Caribbean migrants came from Jamaica. As Caribbean migrants were incorporated into these societies, primarily as workers, the cultural expressive forms of the Caribbean were also exported. Moreover, technological developments in the field of communications, such as the World Wide Web, have accelerated access to all types of Caribbean cultural products.

In Toronto, Eglinton Avenue West¹, affectionately dubbed "Little Jamaica", is home to a number of businesses ranging from record and patty shops to restaurants, hair salons, grocery and clothing stores. The *Jamaica Gleaner* newspaper and the Jamaica National Building Society have established offices on this strip. Whereas businesses in this location cater to Caribbean clientele of all nationalities, it is impossible to walk or drive along Eglinton West without recognizing the strong Jamaican presence in the everyday hustle and bustle of this transnational space. Daily, Jamaica in its multifacetedness is heard in the reggae and dancehall music that compete for "ear time" and in the lingering smell of Jamaican cuisine that wafts through the open windows of cars and buses, especially during the summer. Different groups of Caribbean people who make their way to Eglinton West from the suburbs of Mississauga, Maple, Woodbridge and Brampton add to its atmosphere. Many have come to support the Caribbean-owned businesses, while others come to take a piece of Jamaica back to their homes by buying groceries and other products. Then

there are the few Jamaicans, mostly men, peddling the latest CDs, DVDs, or other wares as they beg you to “buy sometingnuh.” It is on Eglinton West, albeit in a reconfigured form, that those who nostalgically long for Jamaica can find some semblance of familiarity.

While there has been an exciting growth in scholarship on dancehall culture, primarily in the fields of cultural and literary studies as they relate to Jamaica (Stolzoff 2000; Cooper 1995, 2000; Hope 2006), more attention needs to be given to its configuration in other geographical locations and other popular culture arenas.² Apart from the work of artists who memorialize geographic spaces such as Toronto in their songs, dancehall as a cultural phenomenon has yet to be fully explored. This essay makes an empirical contribution to the current scholarship by exploring dancehall culture from a geographic site, in Toronto, which, despite its large Caribbean population, is often a mere footnote in larger diasporic studies. I begin to answer these queries in the popular culture arena with an ethnographic account of how my friends and I encountered dancehall music while living in a predominantly white suburb outside Toronto during the late 1980s and early 1990s. I discuss my scholarly foray into dancehall culture, with emphasis on the music. I then utilize a Black Canadian feminist perspective³, coupled with selected lyrics of female DJs, Tanya Stephens and Lady Saw, to demonstrate how these artists provide a counternarrative within the constraints of a patriarchal society to talk and think about Black female sexuality.

As with most other Black expressive cultural forms, men dominate the production and dissemination of dancehall music, not only as artists, but also as producers, promoters, songwriters, DJs, and the owners of spaces where dancehall is consumed. With respect to the actual music, the lyrics tend to focus overwhelmingly on heterosexual sex, a focus that, according to Carolyn Cooper, “often requires a precise listing of body parts, almost exclusively female and an elaboration of mechanical function” (Cooper 1995, 142). Yet, unlike other Black cultural forms of production, dancehall culture enjoys an overwhelmingly

female following. Given this reality, how do female DJs and consumers of dancehall music negotiate a space/place in this male-dominated sphere? Furthermore, since dancehall music and production are primarily male-controlled, and social relations and sexuality are shaped by power, is it possible for women to be autonomous sexual agents? If so, what does such agency look like? Can Caribbean/Black women find ways to engage in healthy sexual pleasure via dancehall culture? Caribbean feminist scholars have begun to tackle these questions from both a theoretical and empirical perspective. In delineating the essentialist configurations of gender, Patricia Mohammed provides a framework to tackle the questions raised above. She posits that "we negotiate the middle ground between the mind and body, between reason and emotion, between social acceptability and ostracism, between gender norms and sexual identity" (2002, xiv).

Keeping in mind Mohammed's analysis, I focus on dancehall culture in Toronto, with an emphasis on music and dancing. I engage the redemptive and empowering possibilities that dancehall music holds in challenging hegemonic scripts predicated on stereotypes of Black women's sexuality. While dancehall culture is specific to Jamaica, it traverses international boundaries and is visible in other Caribbean enclaves such as Toronto, New York, Miami, and London, where it appears in a hybrid form as ragga. Indeed, the success of dancehall culture owes as much or even more to its international audiences as it does to local audiences. Donna Hope (2006) argues that "indeed since Bob Marley's international success as Jamaica's premier reggae artist, dancehall has proven the most commercially successful form of Jamaican music to date" (22). Hope points to Shabba Ranks, Shaggy, and Sean Paul, among other artists, who have won Grammy awards, as well as those "that have successfully broken into the Japanese, European, and North American markets" (Ibid). Of course, the ascendance of some of these artists in the global arena is not without controversy as overseas audiences sometimes take issue with the content of some of the artists' songs.⁴

Despite its popularity, dancehall music culture activates and re-enacts discursive and material tensions, particularly those around gender visibility in the larger society. That is, at the same time that women are marginalized — for example, as selectors (disc jockeys who play the music), as promoters (people who plan and organize dancehall events), and as artists — they do make claims to the space in ways that are empowering. Still, dancehall music and culture are not produced in a vacuum, but are intricately tied to and constituted by larger political, economic, and social struggles. Despite the ambivalence surrounding dancehall culture and music, it is difficult to overlook how this sphere of artistic expression simultaneously challenges conservative sexual ideologies while bringing the voices of the disaffected to the fore.

Setting the Context: Dancehall as an Oppositional Culture

Dancehall music emerged during the early 1980s in the midst of political and economic turmoil in Jamaica. The overwhelming victory of the Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) under the leadership of Edward Seaga in the early 1980s did very little in the long run to alleviate the country's economic troubles. In the midst of an international recession and an already fragile economic climate at home, the JLP borrowed more money from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) with the goal of stabilizing the economy. The campaign promise of "deliverance" by the JLP did not materialize. Violence erupted across the island, despite the efforts of then opposition leader Michael Manley of the People's National Party (PNP). Decades later, the perils of globalization have left the children of those who might have benefited from PNP policies disillusioned and disenfranchised. Currently in Jamaica, unemployment levels remain high, violence is endemic in the inner cities, and the masses of people barely have the necessities to survive.⁵ Those exposed to the exigencies of "downpression"⁶ are forced to develop creative forms of expression to elucidate their social reality. In this context, dancehall culture, with all its complexities and contradictions, emerged as the voice of the downtrodden. Meanwhile, in

Toronto, Jamaicans, other Caribbean migrants, and their children confront the racial, gender, and economic inequalities that permeate Canadian society. In response, they too have opted to embrace aspects of dancehall culture as it speaks to their own marginalized sensibilities. Indeed, this tendency remains unabated as current African-Caribbean youth, according to Lisa Tomlinson (2012), because of their alienation from the larger Canadian society "maintain ongoing and close ties with reggae, dancehall, and African-American hip hop culture" (21).

As a transnational and oppositional expressive culture, dancehall music challenges and unsettles middle-class Caribbean peoples' Judeo-Christian sensibilities about morality, sexuality and gender relations. In fact, dancehall culture unhinges and makes visible those entrenched hierarchies based on race, class, gender, sexuality and geographic locale. Essentially, dancehall is an extension of and reminiscent of the larger society that contemporary diasporic Black women occupy. To accuse dancehall culture of women's subordination effaces the structural inequality which has spawned slavery, colonialism, imperialism, Judeo-Christianity and global capitalism. This is not to negate dancehall's own support of patriarchal ideals visible in the promotion of male sexual aggression and lyrics that denigrate women. However, the music and the dancehall physical space are mediated by women's own assertions of their sexual autonomy and changing gender relations.

Since its inception, hegemonic representation of male sexuality in dancehall culture centres on the image of DJs (men) who are biologically blessed with staying power in the bedroom. Those who fall short are encouraged to try aphrodisiacs, such as stone and Chini brush, Irish moss, and linseed. In the world of the dancehall, vaginal penetration is the suggested method to engage in sexual intercourse. Other sexual practices such as fellatio, cunnilingus and masturbation are highly discouraged, the first two due primarily to reasons advanced by Judeo-Christianity and Rastafarianism, and the latter as a result of social sanctioning.

Still, the emphasis on multiple sexual partners persists. Thus, the idea that there are more than enough women who are willing to make themselves available physically as sexual partners eliminates the option, at least in theory, of masturbation, at least for men. Furthermore, dominant dancehall discourse often ignores problems such as financial instability, unemployment, and premature ejaculation, any of which can affect sexual intimacy. In the fantasy world of the dancehall, intercourse by penetration remains one of the primary ways in which masculinity is asserted and reinforced. At the same time, the interventions of female DJs and women as consumers of dancehall have made unstable and visible claims to a hegemonic masculinity. Indeed, women not only claim but also contest hegemonic masculinity.

In discussing the reification of masculinity in dancehall culture, Jarrett Brown (1999) notes that “this brand of masculinity functions as a charismatic voice that objectifies the woman and her body as a site of sadistic pleasure in the sex act. In this case, sex becomes a ritual for asserting, initiating and producing manhood” (5). While there is certainly merit to Brown’s suppositions, the argument that all sex acts indicate objectification denies women’s agency over the choices they make before, during and after sexual intercourse. In essence, this argument holds that women are victims to a coercive male sexuality. Additionally, this response suggests that it is primarily through heterosexual sex that women are subjugated. Furthermore, this position does not account for the ways in which women, whether as DJs or consumers, make sexual claims within dancehall culture that challenge common sense and essentialist ideas about male sexuality. Finally, this assertion obscures the multiple ways women and girls find pleasure in dancehall music and culture.

Consuming Dancehall Culture: My Personal and Scholarly Journey

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, my friends and I sang along and danced to those songs most notably concerned with the vagina, or in dancehall

vernacular punani, punash or glamitti. Simultaneously, the penis (hood, buddy) was always active and performing to a willing and waiting punani. Unbeknownst to us, a debate in and outside Jamaica was being waged, culminating in the “slackness” versus culture dichotomy. In attempting to ascertain the popularity of slack songs defined as those with emphasis on “crude and often insulting wordplay pronouncing on sexuality and sexual antagonism” (Gilroy 1992, 118), gun talk, and homophobia, scholars point to a number of factors. Norman Stolzoff maintains that the violence in dancehall is connected to the political climate of the late 1980s and early 1990s. For Stolzoff, the disillusionment among the masses of Jamaicans began with the failure of both Manley’s democratic socialist agenda and Seaga’s liberal policies. Stolzoff and Paul Gilroy also pointed to the death of Bob Marley, a new generation of artists, label demands, and the lack of influence that songwriters and singers had under Manley, which launched a movement away from roots music to lyrics that stressed competition, gun talk, and sex (Stolzoff 2000; Gilroy 1992).

Foregrounding issues of class and status among Jamaicans, Carolyn Cooper argues that “slackness” transcends the sexual politics of dancehall culture. She points out that “slackness” speaks to the disillusionment of working-class men with the lack of economic opportunities and the inability of the state to address these issues. Part of the answer to the rise of slackness in dancehall music may also be found in the scholarship of Keith Nurse (2004) and Linden Lewis (2005) on Caribbean masculinity. Both scholars point to the changing political, social, and economic landscape that has led to a redefinition of women’s conventional roles. Feminists’ struggles have led to the movement of women into purviews traditionally defined as male, and the consequences of industrialization and globalization have left few available opportunities for poor young Black men. Sonjah Niaah Stanley (2005), however, insists that the culture versus “slackness” debate is reductionist at best and pushes for a more complicated analysis that considers, for example, migration, and how dancehall has been defined over time, among other factors.

Theoretical discussions, when translated into practice, however, remain much more complicated, as reflected in how my friends and I engaged with dancehall music in the clubs and dances we frequented. First, a disc jockey's repertoire of songs was never limited to those defined as "slackness". Regardless of the fact that for each female artist we heard during the night there were at least five male artists, disc jockeys injected women's voices into the collection of songs they played. Thus we knew the words verbatim to songs such as Shelly Thunder's "Kuff"⁷ and Lady G's "Nuff Respect."⁸ Thunder's "Kuff" tackles male infidelity and Lady G's "Nuff Respect" takes the form of a female anthem imploring women to be independent. Equally important, we did not leave the clubs without a dose of those songs that fell into the realm of the "culture" or lovers' rock camp⁹. For at least an hour at Ocean 11, Mark Anthony played artists such as Junior Reid, Peter Tosh, Marcia Griffiths, and Bob Marley, whose songs are known for their political and social commentary. From our perspective, there was no distinction between the cultural and "slack" songs that we heard; they simply existed on a continuum, each serving different purposes.

Ironically, artists who were vehemently criticized for condoning and promoting "slackness" also sang songs that fell into the cultural realm. This, of course, is in keeping with a Black cultural tradition that fuses the multifaceted ontological dimensions of Black life. Given this variability, it was difficult to compartmentalize these songs as either cultural or "slack". For example, Shabba Ranks, noted for epitomizing "slackness" and all that it embodies, sang "Reality".¹⁰ Here, Ranks critiques white supremacy and the evils of apartheid, while urging Black self-reflexivity, which begins with recognizing one's connection to Africa. Thus, Ranks signals the fortitude of diasporic connections over time and space. Ranks's "Reality" spoke to my political racial sensibilities. I had not yet discovered feminism, which was probably for the best, given all the stereotypes circulating about feminists at that time.

Negotiating “Slackness” On the Dance Floor

As my friends and I positioned ourselves weekly on various dance floors, were we oblivious to the vulgarity of some of the lyrics, particularly those that incessantly focused on the punani (vagina)? Nevilla explained, “No, I didn’t listen to all the lyrics back then, if the beat sounded good, I just followed the crowd” (Nevilla S., e-mail correspondence with author, 3 November 2005). Gina, who is much younger than I, admitted to listening to the words. She states, “Yes I found them a bit shocking in a racy kind of way, but it added to the eroticism of the music and the dance moves that accompanied it” (Gina L., e-mail correspondence with author, 1 November 2005). Yet some of us who recited the words verbatim to the punani songs did not make the connection between our punanis and the ones the DJs referenced in song. For me, the punanis did not belong to us, or anyone else, for that matter. Debbie added, “I enjoyed the comfort that these songs gave me, because I was new in a country to which I did not feel like I belonged. Also dancing to these songs made me feel that my punani was the best thing since sliced bread” (Debbie M., e-mail correspondence with author, 2 November 2005). Gina and Debbie both echo the sentiments of Black British feminists such as Denise Noble (2000), who sees ragga music as celebrating Black womanhood, a welcome alternative to how Black women’s bodies have historically been perceived.

While listening to dancehall music and memorizing lyrics were important to my friends and me, dancing, which also involved where, how, and whom we danced with, was the highlight of our outings. My friends and I competed to see who knew and could master the latest dance moves. Does this mean that our dancing was “innocent”? What about the voyeuristic gaze of the men who often stood on the periphery of the dance floor watching those “vulgar” moves we performed? How did these voyeurs construct their own understanding of our pleasure? Even though we were conscious of being watched, in some ways, our dancing was “innocent”. We lacked the analytical sophistication that would later be inspired by feminist theorizing to recognize how our bodies were

construed as sites to be objectified. At the same time, we did not need feminism to realize how the dance floor, as a social space, reproduces certain power relations.

Men often read our gyrating and “provocative” bodies as sites where masculinist practices could be enacted. That is, these onlookers imbued our bodies with sexual meanings, which translated into unwanted touches and gyrations, especially from behind. This unnecessary attention occasionally disrupted our pleasure. Indeed, the club space was hardly devoid of sexist practices. While Nevilla enjoyed the music and the people, “the atmosphere was not always inviting” (Nevilla S., e-mail correspondence with author, 3 November 2005). If we declined to dance, frowned at an unwanted touch, or ignored offers for a drink, we were sometimes subjected to a barrage of verbal insults from young and middle-aged men alike. Indeed, some people were unwilling to accept the reality that, while we enjoyed male attention, our presence in these spaces had less to do with attracting men and more about our own enjoyment. In the interstice of this male-defined and male-controlled space, we developed resistance strategies, ranging from self-regulation and accommodation to outright defiance. Trips to the bathroom were a group endeavour because the men hung out by the entrance. We often “talked back” at men who were abrasive or simply disregarded any gesture hinting at any form of intrusion in the space we occupied on the dance floor. Likewise, we danced with, and enjoyed the company of, young men who acted in a non-threatening manner. There were occasions where we intentionally posed with men to prevent potential harassment.

Certainly, then, we were not unconscious dupes who enjoyed all dancehall songs or supported all artists. Whether we heard them in concert, in the confines of our homes, in the clubs, or at a dance, we had our preferences. We liked certain DJs’ voices, lyrics and rhythms, and disliked others. In the final analysis, however, we liked the songs that, along with a hyped crowd, friends,

good food, and an experienced disc jockey, enriched and enhanced our cultural connections in these spaces.

In graduate school, I began to think seriously about dancehall music and all that it purportedly engendered, when a colleague interrogated my complicity in a culture she deemed as inherently misogynistic. Unable to adequately explain how I negotiated my feminist principles with my enjoyment of the music, my colleague told me that I was “a walking contradiction”. Apparently, I symbolized in the flesh women whom feminists characterized as exhibiting a “false consciousness”. By uncritically participating in this culture, I was apparently colluding in my own victimization.¹¹ How could I explain the dichotomy between the music that in those tumultuous teenage years provided my friends and me with a sense of belonging and the recognition, as I moved into my late twenties and early thirties, that this music was being singled out as contributing to women’s subjugation?¹² In retrospect, I concur with Leslie Gotfrit (1991) that “pleasure is a key element in structuring the relationship of the cultural form. It also helps to explain how we might engage in contradictory activities within forms of popular culture, appearing to consent to dominant patriarchal practices and our own social regulation” (177).

Thus, my scholarly interest in dancehall culture, at least as I experienced it in a Canadian diasporic space, was partially a reaction to my colleague, but was also precipitated by other encounters. In graduate school, for example, I sat on a panel for Black History Month entitled “Dancehall: ‘Slackness’ or ‘Culture’”, which aired on CHRY 105.5, York University’s Community Radio Station. The individuals on the panel hailed from various segments of the entertainment industry, but they shared a common nostalgic longing for Rastafarian-inspired music, with its well-known penchant for political and social commentary. As the only upcoming academic and youngest member on the panel, I attempted to complicate the “slackness” versus “culture” antinomy, only to be rebuffed. In no uncertain terms, my fellow panellists informed me that my short life span and feminist-influenced theorizing did not give me the licence

to engage in “adult” discussions about “culture.” But it is precisely the perspectives of consumers of dancehall culture such as myself and my friends that help to complicate the debate such as the one mentioned above.

Feminism and Dancehall Culture

Given the dominance of men as DJs and performers in dancehall, what role do female DJs play? Do they reproduce similar themes to those of their male counterparts? Is there anything subversive in their narratives? Notwithstanding the importance of DJs such as those mentioned earlier and pioneers such as Sista Nancy and Sista Carol, it is Tanya Stephens and Lady Saw, in my opinion, who have been consistently instrumental in engaging with dominant ideas about the construction of female and male sexuality. Indeed, in the heteronormative sphere of the dancehall, Stephens and Saw simultaneously competed with, contradicted, and affirmed dancehall and societal sexual discourses evident in their lyrics and particularly the latter's live performances.

To appreciate the multiple functions that female dancehall DJs play is to first acknowledge Black women's historical sexual legacy. Since slavery, Black women's sexuality has been constructed as an aberration, thereby justifying the acts of violence meted out towards them by plantation owners. Of course, this pathologized sexuality has been reworked to fit contemporary contexts. The historical baggage surrounding the construction of Black women's sexuality has yet to be discarded, and the realities of modernity have resulted in much ambivalence. Despite the hypersexual terrain of North America, with unlimited access to the oversexualized images of Black female bodies via Black Entertainment Television (BET), MTV and other media outlets, such images tend to reinforce and commodify Black female sexuality. Kamala Kempadoo (2009) notes in relation to the Caribbean that “sexuality is simultaneously hyper visible and obscure, that is celebrated in popular culture as an important ingredient in Caribbean social life...yet is shrouded in double entendre, secrecy and

shame" (1). Erica Lawson (2103) in her study on Caribbean-Canadian mothers and daughters noted that "secrecy about sex and sexuality is a common reality in the lives of many Black women" (113).

Although the definition and construction of sexuality is always contested, Black female sexual subjectivities, regardless of geographical locations, remain embattled and distorted. Thus, Hortense Spillers' (1989) insightful commentary that "Black women are the beached whales of the sexual universe, unvoiced, mis-seen, not doing, awaiting their verb" (74) partially holds true. The redemptive possibilities lie in Stephens's and Saw's ability to help create alternative visions and ideas that push the boundaries, revealing an empowered sexuality. They help to break the silence and make visible Caribbean/Black women's sexual subjectivities, accomplishing for Caribbean/Black women what the blues did for African-American working-class women.¹³

In 1997, Stephens released "Too Hype". I heard the hit single "YuhNuhReady Fi Dis Yet" being played at a variety of venues throughout Toronto. The song was also on regular rotation on reggae shows that aired on university radio stations. It also generated a passionate response from young women on the dance floor of Toronto clubs such as Studio 69. When Stephens asks, "But have yuh ever stop to think whamek a gal cheat, Yuh need fi check yuh self before yuh start kiss yuh teeth", the disc jockey then resorted to call-and-response¹⁴. He would lower Stephens' voice and the women (who obviously knew the words by heart) would scream "...YuhNuh Ready Fi Dis Yet", while looking directly at the men as if in conversation with them. In what is often a male-defined space, these young women were returning the gaze through a song with which they obviously identified.

To be sure, dancehall lyrics remain polysemic and open to multiple interpretations. That is, we sometimes interpret texts, whether movies or songs, based on our own social location, which may impart a meaning different from what the author intended. Therefore, as Peter Manuel (1998) maintains, "the social meaning of a song cannot be unproblematically 'read off' of the lyrics by

an analyst, however well-versed in modern literary theory he or she may be" (1). Additionally, there is clearly more at work in the spaces of dancehall music and culture than attention to lyrics only, as Debbie explains:

At that time, I did not listen to [songs] to critique them, but to sing along to the songs and to do the moves at the right moment. I did not find these songs offensive, instead moving to the songs made me feel as if I was back home in Jamaica. For me, it was my comfort of missing home (Debbie M., e-mail correspondence with author, 2 November 2005).

While keeping Manuel's argument in mind, a few inferences can be drawn about "YuhNuh Ready Fi Dis Yet", which is clearly a directive to men. From the young women's reaction to the song, it is clear that the lyrics resonated with them. It is possible that these female club goers identified with the men to which Stephens referred. Moreover, it is also likely that as young heterosexual women they had similar queries about the men in their own or their friends' lives. Maybe these women had wanted to, or had, asked the incisive question put forth by Stephens regarding the process of achieving an orgasm: "Have yuhever wonder what mek a girl cum"?

Deeply embedded in North American and Caribbean culture — despite the gains made by the women's movement — is the notion that women's sexual desires are secondary to men. Stephens insists otherwise: "A woman fus fi satisfy before yuhseyyuh done." The notion that women deserve and want to be sexually fulfilled remains a novel idea for some men. In return, women are socialized to be silent about sex and sexuality and refrain from speaking about their sexual desires and needs with their partners. It is no wonder that, as Paula Webster (1989) argues, "Many of us still stand at the border of our desires hesitating, complaining, berating ourselves and/or our lovers for the sexual deprivation we live with and feel helpless to change" (392). Thus, Stephen's "YuhNuh Ready Fi Dis Yet" is part of the conversation.

While Stephens' and Saw's lyrics abound with sexual metaphors, they are also explicit and provocative. Thus, a second function these artists serve is to challenge certain sexual taboos. In so doing, they give Black women permission to expand their opportunities for sexual pleasure within the confines of a patriarchal culture. In this light, Stephens' "Draw Mi Finger" is all the more remarkable given how stigmatized the practice is. Here, Stephens bemoans being left unsatisfied by a partner who fell asleep following sexual intercourse:

Cause when some a dem dun wuk
wehaffi draw wi finger
Cann tell yu how much di heat still a linger
Bwoy gone a sleep lef me hot like ginger ...(Stephens 1997).

In her study, *Stolen Women: Reclaiming Our Sexuality, Taking Back Our Lives*, Gail Elizabeth Wyatt (1997) pointed out that "Black women ages 18 to 50...may never masturbate at any time in their lives." In fact, she noted that "81 per cent of Black women had never even touched their breasts or genitals to the point of sexual arousal" (156). More recent studies have confirmed Wyatt's finding regarding the lack of acceptance around masturbation for African-American women.¹⁵ These women explained that religious and cultural sanctioning prevented them from touching their own bodies. While these studies are specific to the United States, anecdotal evidence from more current research suggests that similar attitudes exist among Black women in Canada. By encouraging Black/Caribbean women to engage in clitoral self-stimulation, Stephens challenges the pervasiveness of the sexual script in and beyond the borders of dancehall that endorses heterosexual sex and vaginal penetration by the penis as the primary method for women to engage in sexual fulfillment.

Stephens' advocacy for self-pleasuring, where cultural and sexual norms dictate otherwise, is certainly empowering. As Bowman ¹⁶(2014) intimates, "When a woman masturbates, she experiences her sexuality in a way that does not conform to dominant expectations about femininity or female sexuality...she

feels sexual sensations that are not provided by a partner... she need not concern herself with anyone's pleasure but her own" (2). Moving beyond self-clitoral touch, the inability to touch one's breast has other ramifications in terms of Black women's overall health. Black women in the US are more likely to die from breast cancer than their white counterparts because of a much later diagnosis of the illness. Of course, racism, socio-economic status, and cultural differences further act as barriers to Black women's health (Ali et al. 2003; Flynn and Taylor 2009). Stephens' "Draw Mi Finger" can be redefined to include not just personal sexual pleasure but what it means for Black women to live healthy lives overall.

Stephens' CD, "Too Hype", is counterhegemonic, and it does more than unhinge prevailing ideas about male sexuality; the CD articulates a transgressive female sexuality that embodies and encourages female agency and supports Caribbean women's popular sexual pleasure. At the same time, Stephens does not engage in "matie" style competition, a practice celebrated in dancehall culture, whereby women compete for the attention of men who often are entitled to multiple sexual partners. Often, the matie is positioned vis-à-vis the wife or other women. "Too Hype" to run "back-a man" and "be number two" (Stephens 1997), Stephens takes a stand against being set up as a matie. In her two other CDs since *Too Hype*, Stephens continues to challenge male constructions of female sexuality.¹⁷

While Lady Saw's lyrics compared to those of her male counterparts are equally, or in some cases more, explicit and raw, she bears harsher criticism, and, in some cases, is punished for her explicit lyrics. This "double standard" inside and outside of dancehall culture operates as a form of social control to censure "bad girls," such as Saw, who cuss or speak openly and graphically about sex. The knee-jerk response of Saw's critics is to argue that she has internalized the ideals of a patriarchal and sexist culture that teaches some women that they can succeed by adopting the similar misogynistic attitudes expressed by their male counterparts. The proof, besides the crude lyrics, lies in

how these songs also pit women against each other (in the *matie* role) or have them acting as the man's woman as exemplified in "Eh-Em Eh-Em". According to Saw, "Whol heap a gal a lust off a mi eh-em eh-em, Gal a carry malice through mi eh-em eh-em" (Saw 1998). While these themes of rivalry and jealous competition among and between women are definitely common themes in Saw's songs, she is hardly the main arbiter of such a view. Saw's male counterparts are equally contentious, yet they hardly receive similar comments (Cooper 2000).

Like Stephens, Saw also interrogates the myth of male virility, pushes for female sexual independence and challenges hegemonic notions of proper female behaviour. For example, the song "Heist it up" begins with a firm declaration that women are every bit as sexually aggressive as their male counterparts and possess the capacity to perform in the bedroom leaving men "screaming and begging for more" (Saw 1998). Yet, Saw expects that any engagement in sexual intercourse is reciprocal. The idea here is that a man should be able to provide maximum sexual pleasure. She explains as follows:

Some bwoymussitink we easy
Dem nuh know we wann man fi please we
If demcaan handle dat tell dem fi go gogo
Cause hot gal wiwaan man fi grease wi(Saw 1998).

Here, Saw renders an unequivocal challenge to prevailing gender norms about Caribbean sexuality.

As Cooper points out, Lady Saw is not a one-dimensional artist, even though "slackness" is her preferred mode of style. Like Shabba Ranks and other so-called "slackness" DJs, Saw also performs a number of politically and socially conscious songs. I witnessed Lady Saw on stage in Minneapolis in 2004, where she performed to a mixed audience. Saw was explicit, graphic and outrageously funny. The monologues she interspersed throughout her

performance were geared towards both genders. She encouraged women to make sure their vaginas were attractive and that the men needed to work on cleanliness and their bedroom performance. Saw's performance was difficult for female members of the audience. Several young women attempted to admonish Saw for convoluting, for some, an activity that is "pure" with her "dirty" talk. Saw responded by telling one young woman that her rawness is what she is known for. In other words, they had the option of leaving the show if they were uncomfortable. The audience seemed pleased when Saw brought a man from the audience onstage and gyrated while he lay on the floor motionless. Saw also brought individual men and women and a couple on the stage primarily for a "winning" competition¹⁸, chiding them at different moments for being uncomfortable and stiff. Besides demonstrating her obvious skills as a DJ, Saw seemed to be pushing for a less constricted atmosphere whereby sexual discourses can be as much public as they are private. Unlike other artists I have seen in performance, Saw also encouraged her audience to engage in safer sex. Given the high incidence of HIV/AIDS among the demographics in the audience¹⁹, her attention to issues of protected sex was certainly warranted.

The reaction of the young women, while mediated by a number of factors, reveals how uncomfortable discussions of sexuality remain. Despite the pervasiveness of hypersexuality embodied primarily in popular culture, a great deal of confusion and embarrassment around sex and sexuality persist. My own class discussions with my predominantly female students challenge the perception that women are liberated in relation to their sexual experiences and behaviours. Despite the feminist movement's commitment to women's sexual liberation, my students' desires, inquiries, and concerns are dictated by cultural rules, norms and trends that deem certain behaviours acceptable and others taboo. These students point to the catch-22 in which they often find themselves in terms of their sexuality — you are a slut if you do have sex or plenty of it, and frigid or a tease if you abstain. Moreover, Black female students' struggles are intensified due to the historical baggage of a pathologized sexuality, which continues to permeate their psyche. In addition, they point to the misogyny and

sexism prevalent in hip-hop, which makes it difficult to conduct meaningful discussions about sexuality. It is hardly surprising, then, that such young women cringe when listening to Lady Saw.

Conclusion

Artists such as Saw and Stephens are critical to redefining the narrow and limiting ways in which Black women's sexuality is currently viewed. It involves moving beyond the "positive" vs. "negative" binary that seems to preoccupy some scholars, to get at how Black women as actors negotiate their engagement with Black popular cultural forms such as dancehall culture. On a practical level, Saw and Stephens' music can serve as a pedagogical tool to engage Black women, regardless of geographical location, in candid discussions about sex and sexuality. Instead of scholars viewing these artists as merely succumbing to patriarchal ideals, we should acknowledge their contributions to a discourse that empowers Black female sexual subjectivities. Both artists, despite their contradictions and inconsistencies, legitimize the notion of women as desirable sexual subjects who initiate and enjoy sex as much as men. Through their lyrics and performances, Stephens and Saw evoke women as active agents who are able to articulate their sexual desires. In addition, they encourage women to make sex a dynamic, affirming, and pleasurable aspect of their lives.

¹Black Uhuru recorded the song "Youth of Eglinton", a commentary on youth violence. See, Walker (2012).

²There are a few exceptions, notably, Sterling's (2012, 2010, and 2006); in Toronto, a few scholars have looked at popular culture which often includes a nod at dancehall or reggae. See, for example, Walker (2012). Tomlinson (2012) includes a discussion of Carla Marshall, Canada's dancehall queen whose "musical image echoed that of Lady Saw." See, also, Flynn and Marrast (2008).

³A Black Canadian feminist perspective that foregrounds and grapples with the intersections of race, culture, religion, identity, nation, sexuality, and gender in the development of Canada as a white settler colony that often positions itself as a raceless society. See, for example, Flynn (forthcoming); Massaquoi and Wane (2007).

⁴See, for example, Saunders (2003).

⁵Jamaica is near the top of the list of countries with high homicide rates. In 2008, the murder rate was 60 per 100,000, one of the highest in the world (UNODC Homicide Statistics) as quoted in Ford-Smith (2011).

⁶Instead of using the term oppression, Rastafarians coined the term “downpression” to underscore the magnitude of inequality.

⁷<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bs0i2KxUjU8>. Shelly Thunder, “Kuff,” Accessed 24 September 2010

⁸<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HAnHRXvPPuU>, “Nuff Respect,” Accessed 24 September 2010

⁹Lovers' rock refers to music with a romantic emphasis.

¹⁰<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HAnHRXvPPuU>. Shabba Ranks, “Reality”.

¹¹See, Kalinowsky (2001). As a white woman, the author struggles with her love for dancehall music but also the issue of cultural appropriation relating to the physical space.

¹²Noble (2000) and J.T. Springer (2007) address similar issues in calypso.

¹³See Davis (1998).

¹⁴G. Smitherman (1997) defines call-and-response as a “spontaneous verbal and non-verbal interaction between speaker and listener in which all statements (call) are punctuated by expressions (“responses”) from the listener.

¹⁵See for example, J.L. Shulman and S.G. Horne (2003), “The Use of Self-Pleasure: Masturbation and Body Image among African American and European American Women”, *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 27:3, pp. 262-269; E. Laumann and J. Mahay, (2002), “The Social Organization of Women's Health.” In G.M. Wingwood and R.J. DiClemente (Eds.), *Handbook of women's sexual and reproductive health*. New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.

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¹⁷See also Gangsta Blue (2004) and Rebelution (2006) VP Records. I had a chance to meet Tanya Stephens in Toronto in 2006; she was not only down-to-earth and generous with her time, but incredibly intelligent and sophisticated.

¹⁸A dance often done to dancehall or Calypso music where people move their hips front to back and side to side.

¹⁹ With respect to Toronto, see for example, E. Tharao, N. Massaquoi and S. Teclom. 2004. *Silent voices of the AIDS epidemic: African and Caribbean women, their understanding of the various dimensions of HIV/AIDS, and factors that contribute to their silence*. Toronto: Women's Health in Women's Hands.

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The Construction of Black Jamaican Masculinity in a Neocolonial Imaginary: Canadian "Homohegemony" and the "Homophobic Other"

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Abstract

In this discussion, I demonstrate that Canadian news media texts, centered in Toronto, serve to ideologically construct Jamaica as a "homophobic other" along neocolonial lines, with important implications for constructions of race and masculinity. Drawing on Antonio Gramsci, I argue that the production of "homophobic Jamaica" is an illiberal manifestation of "homohegemony" in Canada, a novel incarnation of the more basic benevolent liberal/illiberal tension that characterizes the ideological and material context of queer inclusion. Specifically, it is demonstrated that the construction of "homophobic Jamaica" is consistent with a neocolonial caricature, one that implicitly bolsters the national imagination of white Canadian masculinity as modern and progressive in contradistinction to black Jamaican masculinity, imagined as backward and excessive.

Keywords: Masculinity, neocolonialism, homophobia, Jamaica, homosexuality

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Introduction

In this discussion, I perform a critical reading of three representative Canadian newspaper articles on homosexuality in Jamaica, and one on homosexuality in Southern Commonwealth countries more generally. I demonstrate that these articles serve to ideologically construct Jamaica as a "homophobic other" along neocolonial lines, with important implications for constructions of race and masculinity. This ideological construction of the "homophobic other" takes place in the context of Canadian "homohegemony." Drawing on and extending Antonio Gramsci (Gramsci 1971), I define homohegemony as an ideology of relative inclusion of gay and lesbian citizenship in the Canadian national imaginary, in which the Canadian state extends selective sexual citizenship rights — culminating in same-sex marriage — to the gay and lesbian minority in a "benevolent" liberal fashion. These rights are premised, however, on serious moments of "illiberalism," in terms of specific exclusions both within and outside the nation-state. Homohegemony is entangled, for example, with power relations of capitalism, neocolonialism, patriarchy, and white supremacy. In the post-same-sex marriage moment in Canada, lesbians and gays are commonly imagined as equal citizens in light of the achievement of near legal equality. Though gaps remain in even this realm of formal equality (and more significant inequality is observable in civil societal spaces), some gays and lesbians have recently become, in effect, normative sexual citizens (Stychin 2003). Yet, the ideal-typical gay or lesbian citizen is rarely imagined as a racialized minority (Puar 2007, xxiv, 27-28), and is usually imagined as middle-class and/or a professional (Puar 2007; Sears 2005). Such a sexual citizen, as a member of a constitutionally interpreted and nationally imagined status group based on sexual orientation, must not transgress certain boundaries of sexual fluidity (Valverde 1985) and (cis)gender normativity (Butler 1993; Namaste 2000) lest they sacrifice citizenship status. These specific exclusions within the nation-state emerge as the price of inclusion within the "benevolent" liberal rights regime in which homohegemony advances. It can further be seen that sexual othering in Canada has incompletely yet significantly "flipped" from

a longstanding historical fixation on the “homosexual other” within the country’s borders, to a preoccupation with “homophobic other nations.” The “homophobic other nation” is imagined in the context of the hegemony of homosexual inclusion in Canada, and functions ideologically as a foil or counterpoint to a gay friendly “national self.” Jamaica occupies a significant space in the Canadian national imagination of “homophobic” others, particularly from Canada’s queer capital and the major Jamaican diasporic city of Toronto (Burman 2010).

It will be contended here that the construction of “homophobic Jamaica” is an illiberal manifestation of homohegemony in Canada, a novel incarnation of the more basic benevolent liberal/illiberal tension that characterizes the ideological and material context of homohegemony. Specifically, it will be argued that the construction of “homophobic Jamaica” is consistent with a neocolonial caricature, one that implicitly bolsters constructions of white Canadian masculinity as modern and progressive in contradistinction to a constructed black Jamaican masculinity as backward and excessive. This is not to discount or diminish the importance of LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and/or queer/questioning) rights gains in Canada and other state/societal contexts, but merely to illuminate ongoing exclusions of LGBTQ people and others via attention to some of the ideological and material stakes of LGBTQ rights.

It should be noted that the construction of “homophobic Jamaica” is persuasive, not least because it bases itself in a degree of truth grounded in real practices and experiences of heterosexism — including that which is coercive and at times violent — in the Jamaican context. For example, men’s consensual same-sex sexual activity continues to be expressly, in terms of “gross indecency” legislation (Section 79: The Offences Against the Person Act), and effectively, via “buggery” legislation (Section 76: The Offences Against the Person Act), criminalized in Jamaica within specific British colonial law retained after formal independence from the United Kingdom in 1962. As well, strains of intense

heterosexism exist among some segments of Jamaica's civil society, not least within some expressions of fundamentalist Christianity and dancehall music (Hope 2010, 72; 2006, 79-83). Yet it is contended in this discussion that one must distinguish between material/experiential realities of heterosexism in Jamaica, and Canada's problematic ideological construction of "homophobic Jamaica" along neocolonial, racialized, and gendered lines. The construction of "homophobic Jamaica," mainly from Toronto, is also an exercise in centering white Canadian masculinity vis-à-vis black Jamaican masculinity within a subtle neocolonial imaginary of Jamaica. Queerness — and more specifically, normative queer citizenship — therefore significantly enters into the construction of othered masculinity in contemporary neocolonial relations.

Very Ideological Texts

The first article is titled, "Jamaica's leading gay activist, Maurice Tomlinson, married a Torontonion" (Porter 2012).¹ The article profiles Jamaican and international LGBTQ activist, Maurice Tomlinson. It prominently characterizes Tomlinson as living a "double life." Being gay is cast as completely different in Canada relative to Jamaica. Notably, the metaphor of the "double life" lends itself to thinking about Canada and Jamaica in binary terms on the issue of homosexuality. It also excludes the possibility that a gay- or lesbian-identified Jamaican-Canadian could negotiate an integrated diasporic and transnational existence in spite of the differences that exist in the regulation of homosexuality between the two nation-states. The text does well to highlight real heterosexism in Jamaica that has in fact forced some gay and lesbian Jamaicans to leave the country. What is most notable, however, is what is not mentioned in the news text.

Omitted in the discussion of "homophobia" are social movements and everyday challenges to extant heterosexist practices in Jamaica, queer spaces in Jamaica, and ongoing heterosexism and other exclusions in Canada.

Language like “the country’s [Jamaica’s] virulent homophobia,” and “[Tomlinson] is right to be scared” since “vigilante justice against gay men is common in Jamaica,” lead to the impression that Jamaica is a uniformly “homophobic” place. A whole culture of “virulent homophobia” is herein generalized from particular and particularly shocking incidents of heterosexual violence. This can be observed where the article relates: “Last year, two men were chopped to death with machetes because they were gay.” Importantly, it is the function and meaning of these discourses, rather than the particular examples to which they relate — examples that are tragic and truly unspeakable — that must be queried. The troubling effect of the discursive relating of these types of examples is that their horrific details and imagery have a tendency to slip into a generalized notion of a racialized Jamaican “homophobia” for a Canadian audience, similar to the generalization of a “homophobic” culture from the particularities of Jamaica’s legal context (Gosine 2012, 515). At no point in the storyline is there a “breakage” to reflect on whether realities of violence against gays and lesbians (and especially against other queers) continue to occur in the Canadian state and societal context (Lamble 2012). It is actively forgotten that manifestations of heterosexism, often of a violent nature, persist. For example, 218 police-reported hate crimes in Canada in 2010 were motivated by sexual orientation, with 65 percent of those being considered “violent” (Dowden and Brennan 2012). This statistic does not even take into account the epidemic of the bullying of LGBTQ youth and LGBTQ youth suicide, which have prompted such noble if structurally insufficient interventions as the “It Gets Better” campaign (It Gets Better Canada).² The spectre of such violence in Canada is thus relegated to the past, further illustrated in the text’s assertion: “Change both seeps and charges. Just think: 11 years ago this month, [Reverend] Hawkes performed the country’s first gay wedding, wearing a bulletproof vest under his clerical vestments.” While the admission of realities of violence against gays and lesbians in Canada could be read positively, as a breaking down of the Canada/Jamaica dualism on this issue, the statement also reads as a suggestion of how far Canada has come since the legalization of same-sex marriage, relegating Jamaica to a much

earlier stage of gay and lesbian rights development during the same temporal period.

This assessment assumes that same-sex marriage is the end of a teleos of progress on LGBTQ rights in Canada. The specific example of the continuing lack of explicit transgender legal protections in Canadian jurisdictions — including federally (Stone 2014)³ — indicates a clear absence of legal equality for transgender persons that would serve to symbolize equal citizenship in the national imaginary (Egale Canada 2012; 2013). In fact, same-sex marriage can be seen to entrench binary notions of sex and gender, thus bolstering contemporary cis-sexism in Canada. Moreover, hegemonic forms of queer citizenship represented by the institution of same-sex marriage may not even be directly relevant to the diverse same-sex/gender nonconforming identities, practices, and family forms of queers of colour in Canada (Crichlow 2004),⁴ revealing the racialized character of queer citizenship and community in Canada. Finally, it bears mentioning that same-sex marriage marked the arrival of near formal equality for normative gay and lesbian citizens, but there exist continued restrictions even in this realm of basic legal equality in Canada. Family policy continues to institute legal inequality (Epstein 2012); age of consent laws remain unequal for vaginal versus anal intercourse, with a higher age of consent for the latter in jurisdictions where Canada's anal sex law (Section 159 of Canada's Criminal Code) has not been deemed unconstitutional by the courts, and prohibitions on anal sex in which more than two persons participate or are present likewise continue to be legally in effect in some Canadian jurisdictions in spite of no similar prohibitions on "group sex" for other forms of sexual activity (Rayside 2008, 117-18; Criminal Code, Anal Intercourse, Section 159; Tanovitch 2010; Barriere 2004); and restrictions on the donation of blood by sexually active homosexual and bisexual men are still instituted by Canadian Blood Services (CBC News 2013).⁵ Finally, the "law of provocation," recognized by common law, retains heterosexist elements. This law has operated to allow the "reasonable" heterosexual man who kills another man in a fit of "panic" because of a perceived "homosexual sexual advance"

to be convicted of manslaughter instead of murder (Banks 1997). Thus, subtle and systemic legal and societal inequality persist even for those sexual citizens who have been granted significant citizenship rights marking their imagined inclusion as equal members of the nation. This is not to equate state/societal heterosexism in Canada and Jamaica but rather to deconstruct the common sense construction of Canada/Jamaica on this issue along the lines of a dualism, and to inject a much needed intersectional analysis (Crenshaw 2005).

Stephen Lewis, a prominent former Canadian social democratic politician with an impressive record of involvement with the UN and in development work, as well as a colleague of Tomlinson's through their mutual work for AIDS-Free World, is quoted in the article as saying that Tomlinson is "on a personal crusade to convert Jamaica to tolerance." While Lewis is considered to be solidly on the left of the Canadian political spectrum, the language used here betrays an implicit acceptance of a form of neocolonialism surrounding issues of homosexuality. This suggests that such contemporary imperial assumptions are shared across even left segments of the political spectrum in Canada, befitting a national identity that is hegemonic. The religious metaphor of "converting" Jamaica conjures up colonial imagery and the role of religion in colonialism historically. The idea that Jamaica needs to be converted to "tolerance" assumes its presently intolerant nature. This stands in contrast to the unstated but heavily implied assumption, through the text and photo alike, of Canada's modern, advanced, or more enlightened nature. This constructed modernity is also seen in the text's implicit treatment of masculinity.

The fact that Lewis (who is white, straight, and male) is a well-respected elder statesman and a symbol in many ways of Canada's progressive/social justice tradition, functions along with the mention of Reverend Hawkes (who is white, gay, and male) in the text to subtly code Canadian men — men in the image of Lewis and Hawkes — as modern and progressive in their tolerance, presumably contrasted with black heterosexual men in Jamaica. The masculinity and whiteness of homohegemony are here undeniable in terms of Lewis

featuring so prominently in the article, as well as in terms of the pictorial representation of the wedding ceremony itself, in which Hawkes is depicted signing the marriage certificate and Tomlinson and his husband (who is white) are pictured along with another white male in the background. Thus, whiteness and masculinity abound in the actual image connected with the article, and in the imagery conjured up by the language of the article. The text describes important features of the Jamaican context, such as former Prime Minister Bruce Golding being "openly homophobic," and Tomlinson's account of a male police officer who went on a hateful tirade against gays; the text pairs this with an important discussion of potential advancements on gay and lesbian issues under Prime Minister, Portia Simpson Miller. While these facts are important to note and the anecdotes indeed flow from Tomlinson's painful personal experiences of heterosexism, the representation of Jamaican males/men (made sharper with the contrast to Jamaica's female Prime Minister) alongside Canadian males/men in the article heightens the problematic effect of painting black Jamaican men (presumably including many in Canada) as intolerant and regressive, setting up a contrast with white "Canadian" men as modern and progressive. Interestingly, the implication is also that Tomlinson is only in a position to save Jamaica now that he has been saved by Canada. A "national self" is herein produced as a gay and lesbian refuge, a neoimperial position from which gestures of assistance to neocolonial Jamaica can be made. This narrative of rescue is characteristic of much of the discourse about Jamaica's gays and lesbians in these news media texts, speaking to an understanding of Jamaican queers as "third world queers" (similar to the construction of "third world women;" see Mohanty 2003, 22, 40-42) that need assistance in the face of an intractable intolerance.

The symbolic function of the immigrant gay Jamaican-Canadian man — rarely a lesbian in the discourses that I have examined as part of a larger project — is crucial here. The gay Jamaican-Canadian who has left Jamaica for Canada tends to be celebrated in these discourses in a way that presumably makes Canadians feel proud of their nation's status as a gay-friendly refuge. This

discourse, however, generally also ignores race, class, (cis)gender, and other intersections of the gay Jamaican-Canadian's identity that must be negotiated upon migration to Canada. That the gay Jamaican-Canadian might have to negotiate racism, for example, particular forms of sexual exoticization or objectification in the case of black Caribbean-Canadian men in the mainstream and malestream white gay community in Canada (Walcott 2006; Wahab and Plaza 2009, 4) is unlikely to even be intelligible in the delimited field of meaning constructed by these common sense discourses. The gay Jamaican-Canadian in these texts speaks to lived experiential realities of heterosexism in Jamaica, but, crucially, the gay Jamaican-Canadian does not completely represent himself nor does he represent all queer Jamaicans still living in Jamaica.

This news media text ends with a curious statement that needs to be interrogated: "Looking at the freckles that splash down Tomlinson's left cheek like sugar grains, I wonder how anyone could hate a man so breathlessly beautiful." This physical description is odd for its inclusion in the article, not least since there is already a photo of Tomlinson and his husband beside the text. The statement is also heavily racialized. Tomlinson's freckles appearing to look like "sugar grains" seems to connect to Jamaica's plantation history involving sugarcane, a history in which black African slaves laboured under coercive and torturous conditions. Further, that it is "hard to imagine" that anyone could "hate" Tomlinson implies that Jamaicans must be extremely, monstrously, or perversely "homophobic" — a "homophobia" cast as truly other for the Canadian national imagination. This is revealing of a tendency to treat Jamaica, and indeed even the character of Jamaicans (particularly black Jamaican men), as stereotypically uncivilized. Modern civilization is indexed to the benevolent state treatment of homosexuality, with Canada (and white Canadian men in the text) acting as exemplary.

Another article, "'Murder music' sparks Caribbean tourism boycott call," wades into an ongoing debate about "homophobic" music and its international

export, mainly from Jamaica (Infantry 2008).⁶ Jamaica provides the primary context for the article's discussion of those who are engaged in attempting to prevent certain dancehall music, or what the article imprecisely refers to as "reggae," from being distributed and performed in Canada. These actions are based on the rationale that the music, dubbed "murder music" by gay rights activists, contains "threatening sentiments toward homosexuals and pejorative patois terms for them." The motivation behind this campaign is that cracking down on such "homophobic" music will have an impact in Jamaica, where, according to gay Jamaican asylum-seeker Gareth Henry, quoted in the article, a climate of homophobia and homophobic violence is "sanctioned" by the state and "supported by reggae artists and the church."

As background to the discursive analysis of this article, it is important to point out that the coalition comprising "Stop Murder Music (Canada)" has been part of a larger international campaign and has contained a number of groups, including LGBTQ, anti-racist, and other human rights organizations. The coalition was a working group of the Canadian Caribbean Human Rights Group (CCHRG). It initially included the participation of the Jamaica Forum for Lesbians, All-Sexuals and Gays (J-FLAG), the main LGBTQ rights NGO in Jamaica (Stop Murder Music (Canada)). One of the interview participants consulted for a larger research project that I have been engaged in, a current coordinator for J-FLAG, explained that the organization, then under a different generation of leadership, was an early supporter of the Stop the Murder Music campaign, but has since sought to distance itself from some of the discourses and "persona" surrounding it, including the idea of a tourism boycott of Jamaica.⁷ This interviewee and others notably pointed out, however, that the campaign did enjoy a degree of success in persuading artists (who are mostly male) to abandon "homophobic" lyrics that should be acknowledged.

Returning to the article, the text recounts a Toronto forum in 2008 called "The Sound of Hate," where two hundred people turned out to talk about the problem of "murder music" on a Friday evening at the University of Toronto. A

tourism boycott was suggested at this forum, as the title of the article and its very first line indicate. While the report of this town hall-style gathering goes on to suggest that a fairly careful conversation took place, the text is nevertheless revealing of the common sense construction of a universally “homophobic Jamaica,” with implications for constructions of masculinity and race within neocolonial space.

Situating the story in material conditions, the very idea of a meeting consisting of several hundred people in Toronto, brought together to discuss the problem of Jamaican dancehall music on a Friday night, suggests a certain preoccupation in Canada's largest city with Jamaica's ascribed “homophobia.” While this interest is no doubt fuelled by the legitimate concerns of members of the substantial Jamaican and Caribbean diasporas in Toronto, as well as, and including, members of the queer community there, both the gathering and the reporting of it are also conditioned by homohegemony. The decision to focus on hateful, heterosexist music and its international circulation presumably grabs Canadians' attention. Yet, this is precisely the issue, as a mainstream Canadian audience is likely to interpret this message as a representation of Jamaica in general. This is particularly the case since the article shifts among discussions of “this popular segment of reggae,” to “homophobic violence,” to “homophobia” in Jamaica more generally. The causal arrows are here obscured in one convoluted image of a universally homophobic nation. Particular instances or expressions of heterosexism, in this case once again related by a gay male Jamaican-Canadian immigrant who functions as the native informant, tend to be generalized in these discourses and their popular reception.

The discussion of “murder music” and “homophobic violence” at the outset of the article quickly moves into a wholesale portrayal of Jamaica in a decidedly backward light: “a country where sodomy is a criminal offence, abortion is illegal and a condoms-in-schools proposal was recently shot down.” This is a portrayal of Jamaica as socially and politically pre-modern, with

"homophobia" providing the main context of this assessment. Seen in this example, the shaming of "murder music" and the "sound of hate" can quickly slip into a shaming of Jamaica's assumed murderous "homophobia" and hateful culture. More elementally concerning homohegemony, the very first line of the text includes the statement that Caribbean governments need to be pressured "to protect the human rights of their gay citizenry." Given that homohegemony is precisely about the imagination of gays and lesbians as equal sexual citizens, it is highly significant that this opening statement calls attention to a lack of gay and lesbian citizenship in Caribbean countries. This is a clear gesture at "homophobic" other nations on precisely the issue, sexual citizenship, that homohegemony has come to crystallize domestically, with Jamaica functioning as the main Caribbean "homophobic" counterpoint.

The suggested tourism boycott would have the effect of seriously harming the Jamaican economy, dependent as it is on tourism from key countries of the global North, including Canada. This heavy dependence on tourism is a manifestation of an unequal, neocolonial economic relationship with Canada and other Northern nations, as well as the continuation of colonial economic patterns (Burman 2010, 26). As Jenny Burman points out, tourism is one of Jamaica's "top few foreign exchange earners ... along with bauxite and migrant remittances," exemplifying contemporarily "the distinctive ways in which Canada, as a former British settler colony, and Jamaica, as a former plantation and slave colony with few settlers, were integrated into the global economy" (Burman 2010, 26). The economic power imbalance between Canada and Jamaica remains a largely hidden condition in Canadian media coverage of "homophobic Jamaica," elided in framing Jamaica's problem with its sexual citizenry.

Finally, the news article omits what the problem of "homophobic" dancehall music is actually about. The particular dancehall music under discussion is not situated in its historical context. Following the scholarship of Donna Hope, it is worth considering that this type of overt or extreme

heterosexist and misogynistic dancehall music is actually rather novel, and came about as part of a wider reaction within Jamaican society to the increased global and local visibility of gays and lesbians in the late 1990s (Hope 2006, 81-82). Applying these insights, the dancehall artists in question have not been reacting to same-sex sexual activity or same-sex sexual object choice *per se*, though certainly this forms part of the context of these reactions, but to the increased public visibility of “out” gays and lesbians. This is particularly the case regarding gay Jamaican men, who are sometimes perceived to be in direct violation of masculinity and/or to be feminine, and are thus constructed as offensive or even threatening to black Jamaican postcolonial masculinity, and to the heteropatriarchal neocolonial state (Hope 2006, 79-84; though about The Bahamas, see also Alexander 1997, 65-67, 86-87).⁸ These reactions are therefore significantly linked to dominant masculinity and the association of male homosexual identity with feminization, for example in terms of a perceived failure to dominate women as mandated by traditional masculinity.⁹ That such concerns with homosexuality in dancehall music largely turn on masculinity and the particular threat of male homosexuality is evidenced by “the paucity of dancehall songs that violently denounce lesbianism and the ... surfeit of songs and lyrics that denounce male homosexuality” (Hope 2006, 83). This amplified heterosexist reaction, within both dancehall music and some segments of the wider Jamaican society, has also been advanced in the context of perceptions of homosexuality as an elite/outside/foreign/Northern influence, as something fundamentally un-Jamaican (LaFont 2001).

Such a contextual analysis is not at all meant to minimize or act as an apologist for heterosexist lyrics in popular music, some of which are truly unsettling. Yet, the unproblematic assumption of “homophobic” music, let alone a “homophobic” culture, is inaccurate given that it ignores that these reactions advanced within dancehall music have been motivated as much by concerns about foreignness, publicity of gay and lesbian identity, and gender nonconformity within a heteropatriarchal and neocolonial context, as they have been by concerns about sexual orientation. These artists and their

followers are also, as Donna Hope argues, reacting in the context of somewhat of a crisis of black masculinity brought on by the difficult economic circumstances in Jamaica induced by neoliberalism, and women's advancements relative to some groups of men under contemporary social and economic conditions (Hope 2006, 84-85). Thus it can be seen that dancehall music in many ways represents a challenge by black/Afro-Caribbean, working-class masculinity to the historically significant intersecting classed and racialized character of masculine power in Jamaica (including in the neocolonial state, with a continuing correlation between upper-class persons and lighter skin-tones, as well as between upper-class individuals and less Afro-Caribbean markers of race). On the other hand, deeply heterosexist music, as Hope points out, entrenches and extends the colonial legacy vis-à-vis gender and sexuality. The point for our present purposes is that the reporting of heterosexist dancehall music, in addition to cementing the construction of "homophobic Jamaica," is likely to confirm common sense Canadian understandings of black Jamaican masculinity as backward in its intolerance. In effect, this is a construction of black Jamaican masculinity, based on the predominantly black male dancehall artists under indictment within these media discourses, as having an excessive, pre-modern mentality. Invisibilized is the fact that dancehall music advances a contradictory challenge to (neo)colonial masculinity and power relations, power relations that Canada is part of. Hegemonic Canadian news media discourses prefer to fixate on the "sound of hate," a sound that registers as emanating from a generally homophobic nation with an excessive and regressive masculine vibe.

Moving from media coverage of civil society to media coverage of political society (Gramsci 1971), in "Commonwealth countries ignoring hatred, Baird says," Laura Payton writes about Canada's Conservative Foreign Affairs Minister, John Baird, as he turns to a promotion of gay rights and religious freedom internationally (Payton 2012).¹⁰ Notably, this combination of gay rights and religious freedom is itself curious. It speaks to the need to appease the Conservative Party's political base in Canada, including electoral and financial

constituencies, and thus balance homohegemony with socially conservative elements still influential in spite of being politically marginalized in Canadian society (Smith 2008, 188; Warner 2012). The article recounts a “sweeping speech about human rights” delivered by Baird in London, England, in which the Conservative Minister hammered home the message that “Canada won’t stand by while its ‘Commonwealth cousins’ criminalize homosexuality and ignore other fundamental freedoms.” The article quotes Baird as stating in his speech that “we will not sit in our far-off homes and plead ignorance to crimes against those who seek the same freedoms we enjoy.” While the article does not refer specifically to Jamaica, Jamaica is a prominent Commonwealth country retaining buggery and gross indecency legislation, one that is often singled out in international discourses in addition to Canadian discourses (US Department of State 2008; Human Rights Watch 2004; Amnesty International 2007).

This speech and its coverage represent an example of Canadian homohegemony and the neocolonial construction of “homophobic” others in their most stark and contradictory forms. Not least, the contradictions of homohegemony are observable in the fact that Baird, who is white and male, is also well known to be queer (presumably gay) in LGBTQ and political circles, though he does not speak to the general Canadian public about his sexual identity. Because this fact is so well known in various Canadian circles in political and civil society, noting it here is not tantamount to “outing.” On the contrary, not mentioning it would be interpreted by many Canadian readers as an obvious omission, and, in the context of this discussion and its wider audience, might appear as an effort to conceal homohegemony’s contradictions. That Commonwealth countries of the global South are being chastised on the issue of gay rights by a Conservative cabinet minister who is publicly silent on his own queer subjectivity reveals the active invisibilization of ongoing heteronormativity in Canada in the very same breath as Baird’s criticism of “homophobic others.” While it is true that individuals neglect to publicly “come out” for a variety of complex, including critical, reasons, it is highly likely in this case that segments of the Conservative Party and its supporters, while permissive of the condemnation

of "homophobic others," are still reluctant to embrace an openly gay Canadian cabinet minister with a major portfolio such as Foreign Affairs. As a white queer man with conservable class privilege and a largely normative gender presentation, Baird's failure to publicly come out must also be viewed in terms of a reluctance to cede white heteropatriarchal privilege. This is reflective of a wider trend in which many white, gay, middle- and upper-class Canadian men remain complicit with varying degrees of heteronormativity and aligned with conservative political forces. More generally, that social democratic (as represented by Stephen Lewis, discussed above) and conservative Canadian political voices alike are invested in the narrative of Canadian homohegemony in terms of both its domestic "benevolent" liberal inclusive elements and its international illiberal exclusionary elements speaks to its pervasiveness as a marker of national identity. In the neocolonial championing of gay rights by prominent white Canadian men in political society, it can once again be seen that there is an implicit coding of white Canadian masculinity as modern, progressive, and civilized, in contradistinction to the constructed backward, excessive, and racialized masculinity of the global South that enacts "regressive laws" (according to Baird's speech) on women's rights and LGBTQ rights. These are places, according to Baird, where "darkness still lives," a racialized and neocolonial construction of such contexts as having yet to see the light of progress.

In addition to exemplifying contemporary neocolonialism, the article erases histories of colonialism. The media text completely fails to mention that much of the anti-same-sex legislation currently in existence in Commonwealth countries today is a direct result of a history of white heteropatriarchal British imperial law.¹¹ This is the case, for example, in the Jamaican and wider Anglophone Caribbean contexts (AIDS-Free World 2010).¹² This shared legal history, not without amendments and additions to the laws in question by some "postcolonial" nation-states (Alexander 1997; AIDS-Free World 2010), is a major reason why 41 out of an estimated 76 countries that continue to criminalize same-sex sexual activity among consenting adults worldwide (not counting

Canada and other states with more minor anti-same-sex legislation) are members of the Commonwealth (Itaborahy and Zhu 2013; Kaleidoscope Trust 2013). The text problematically reports that “homosexuality is illegal in 41 of 54 Commonwealth member states.” As we have seen, in the Jamaican context, it is men’s same-sex sexual activity, rather than homosexual identity, that is in fact illegal. The form that this criminalization presently takes in Jamaica - buggery and gross indecency laws - is the same form that the repression of same-sex sexual activity has historically taken in England, Canada, as well as other legal contexts influenced by a British history of sexuality (Kinsman 1987).¹³ In sum, the article fails to contextualize these “dozens of Commonwealth countries” with “regressive and punitive laws” by referencing the invisible elephant in the room: British imperialism. It cannot be assumed that readers will simply make this connection themselves, particularly since the indictment of these “Commonwealth cousins” occurs alongside a celebratory mention of the “values” shared by Canada and the United Kingdom. While the textual production of “homophobic others” seeks to erase uncomfortable histories of colonialism, a clear continuity can be observed in the way contemporary homohegemony places whiteness and masculinity at the centre of its neocolonial gaze, a gaze of which white neoimperial gays are now themselves a part.

A final article to be considered concerns the textual confluence of the Canadian military, homosexuality, masculinity, and Jamaica. In “Military joins Pride parade,” Emma Reilly writes about the first official participation of personnel from the Canadian Armed Forces in the Toronto Pride Parade in the summer of 2008 (Reilly 2008).¹⁴ This was the same year as the selection of Henry, formerly of Jamaica, as International Grand Marshal, a fact that provides the context for the conclusion of the article. After mentioning the official participation, for the first time, of members of the Canadian Armed Forces in the Parade, the text moves on to highlight a number of political leaders from different political parties who were also in attendance. Brief attention is then given to the history of struggle of gays and lesbians in the military, with Pride

Toronto's Executive Director Fatima Amarshi summarizing: "So for the military to turn around and recognize its soldiers, the diversity within its ranks and the need to have a presence at Pride means a tremendous amount." Mention is also made of the fact that the Hamilton Pride Parade controversially banned members of the military from participation earlier that same month, causing a major reaction among some members of the gay community who argued that the military has substantially changed since its discriminatory policies in the early 1990s. Some of the more political messages of the Toronto Pride Parade are then noted in the article, which also points out that the women-centred "Dyke March" is a more "grassroots" and radical parade that occurs alongside the larger event. Thus, a degree of nuance is evident in the text in terms of an implicit recognition of counter-hegemony; some queers in Canada reject the particular form of inclusion on offer under homohegemony, remaining politicized in a radical fashion and resisting alignment with the Canadian state.

Along with the police, the military is the classic expression of a nation-state's coercive authority. Furthermore, who is included in the military carries substantial symbolic and ideological weight in many nations (Stychin 1995; Enloe 1983). That the military is now marching in Pride speaks to a fundamental transformation in the dominant Canadian understanding of the relationship of homosexuality to national identity and the state. It also reflects a fundamental transformation in the LGBTQ community's overall orientation toward and identification with the state and military, which have historically, and decisively, excluded them (Kinsman and Gentile 2010). These centres of power, symbols of security, and conveyors of national community have been among the most resistant to change as homohegemony has gradually and unevenly ascended (Kinsman 1987; Kinsman and Gentile 2010). The military's marching in Pride and the overall celebratory reporting in texts such as this article together represent a normalization of homosexual citizenship in the Canadian national imaginary in a way that would have been almost unthinkable even twenty years ago. The militarization of Pride and the homosexualization of the military reflect a massive

change in common sense and LGBTQ conceptions of sexual citizenship in Canada.

The military has functioned as an important locus for the production of masculinity and femininity in the state and society of modern nation-states, not least in terms of the historical exclusion of women (Enloe 1983). In spite of the incorporation of some women into its ranks in many countries, this has occurred largely along the lines of a gendered division of labour (for example, the exclusion of women from command structures and combat roles). This incorporation has not fundamentally challenged the normatively masculine status of the military, nor has it undermined systemic (hetero)sexism within the institution in any significant way. Thus, the military remains a very masculine institution. The militarization of Pride is simultaneously, therefore, a further masculinization of Pride, in which physically fit gay soldiers – mostly white – don khaki-coloured masculine drag in order to flex the muscles of homohegemony for a consenting public. Thus, the real-life and textual collision of the military and Pride is also a collision of masculinity and Pride, reinforcing and perhaps even extending the patriarchal context of homohegemony, and, more subtly, the whiteness of Canadian masculinity.

In spite of the fact that some elements of a contradictory domestic context are accounted for in the article, in terms of an implicit recognition of counter-hegemony, there is no such nuance in the coverage of Jamaica. As part of the text's treatment of the more "political" side of Pride, it closes with a discussion of "homophobia" in Jamaica. A specific focus is placed on Henry's decision to leave Jamaica because of "homophobic" violence. This occurs, however, alongside the text's implicit imagination of the figure of the white gay soldier. The diasporic black gay Jamaican can here be seen to represent a lack of queer agency (even though in actual fact, he has exercised a degree of queer agency that most middle-class gays born in Canada have never had to negotiate) given his constructed status as an object of queer Canadian rescue. His status as International Grand Marshall, and its reporting here, attests to the

"homophobia" of Jamaica and the international "benevolence" of gay friendly Canada. By contrast, the text's implicit imagined figure of the white, physically fit gay soldier represents a huge degree of agency. The latter is now able to embody and project a white Canadian masculinity sanctioned by the coercive arm of the state itself. Such masculinity is subtly positioned as superior in its modernity, relative to the constructed "homophobic" black masculinity of Jamaica that occasioned Henry's move to Canada.

Discussion and Conclusion

In this discussion, I have argued that the construction of "homophobic Jamaica" is an illiberal manifestation of homohegemony in Canada, an ideology about inclusive queer citizenship that is nevertheless premised upon significant exclusions of LGBTQ people and others. Specifically, it has been argued that the construction of "homophobic Jamaica" takes place along neocolonial lines, lines that implicitly advance constructions of white Canadian masculinity as modern and progressive in its treatment of lesbians and gays in contrast to a constructed black Jamaican masculinity as backward and excessive in its denial of gay and lesbian citizenship rights.

In effect, the discourse analysis of representative media texts on homosexuality in Jamaica and one on Southern Commonwealth countries in general has shown that homohegemony's construction of "homophobic Jamaica" does not merely function to produce a sense of inclusive sexual citizenship in Canada. More subtly, it informs understandings of white Canadian men as superior to black Caribbean men and thereby legitimizes the continuation of unequal economic and political power relations between the two patriarchal contexts. This is not altogether surprising insofar as sexual othering of the Caribbean has long served racialized and patriarchal — in addition to imperial and capitalist — interests (Kempadoo 2004); the terms of reference of sexual othering and normative sexual citizenship have significantly

and queerly changed, but longstanding imperial and racialized masculine interests remain at the heart of sexual ideology.

An implication of this analysis is that the problematic construction of “homophobic Jamaica” is ultimately unhelpful in addressing heterosexism in Jamaica and Canada alike. It obscures the ideological and material exclusions and stakes of such constructions. To the extent to which sexual othering supports an overall structure of neocolonialism between the two nations, the construction of “homophobic Jamaica” may even ironically contribute to conditions in the Jamaican state that make heterosexism more difficult for local activists to dislodge. What is needed is movement away from the masculine and white supremacist logic and interests of the gay-friendly Canada/homophobic Jamaica dichotomy uncovered in this discussion, and towards a social movement based in an ethics and praxis of transnational sexual solidarity. Building such a movement must move beyond the deconstruction of texts and into the similarities, differences, and relationships between and among “Northern,” “Southern,” and diasporic contexts on issues of sexuality and its intersections. It is hoped that this discussion, advanced from the admittedly vexed positionality of being a white gay man cast within relatively normative constructions of queer citizenship in Canada, may contribute in some small way to further critical and constructive conversations.

¹ Porter, Catherine. 2012. "Jamaica's leading gay activist, Maurice Tomlinson, married a Torontonian." *The Toronto Star*, January 10. http://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2012/01/10/porter_jamaicas_leading_gay_activist_maurice_tomlinson_married_a_torontonian.html.

² "It Gets Better" is a video campaign showcasing prominent and everyday LGBTQ people for whom life has gotten better as they have gotten older. The campaign has been a response to the epidemic of the bullying and suicide of LGBTQ youth in Canada and the US.

³ Stone, Laura. 2014. "NDP MP still hopes Senate passes transgender rights bill – three years on." *Global News*, Oct 1. <http://globalnews.ca/news/1593082/ndp-mp-still-hopes-senate-passes-transgender-rights-bill-three-years-on/>.

⁴ An example of which is the hidden sexual epistemologies and community forms of "buller men and batty bwoys" in the Canadian urban context. See Crichlow 2004.

⁵ CBC News. 2013. "Blood donation ban lifted for some men who have sex with men." May 22. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/health/story/2013/05/22/blood-policy-men.html>.

⁶ Infantry, Ashante. 2008. "'Murder music' sparks Caribbean tourism boycott call." *The Toronto Star*, March 3. http://www.thestar.com/news/2008/03/03/murder_music_sparks_caribbean_tourism_boycott_call.html.

⁷ Mr. Lees (LGBTQ activist with J-FLAG), recorded Skype interview and transcription by author, May 2013. Name is an alias to protect the interviewee's anonymity.

⁸ This analysis also derives from interviews with LGBTQ Jamaicans as part of a larger project. Although about another Anglophone Caribbean context, the Bahamas, the work of M. Jacqui Alexander is instructive in discussing neocolonial, Black heteropatriarchal state formation, and the masculinity of national identity. See Alexander 1997.

⁹ Of course, gendered constructions of homosexuality and lesbianism have been and continue to be common in a number of contexts, including in Canada.

¹⁰ Payton, Laura. 2012. "Commonwealth countries ignoring hatred, Baird says." *CBC News*, January 23. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/story/2012/01/23/pol-baird-commonwealth-speech-gay-rights.html>.

¹¹ I am indebted to Alexander for the concept of "white imperial heteropatriarchy," also operationalized with respect to the history of British imperialism in the Caribbean. See Alexander 1997, 66.

¹² In addition, this derives from Maurice Tomlinson (Legal Advisor, "Marginalized Groups," for AIDS-Free World), written interview over email by author, July 23, 2013.

¹³ "Sodomy" and "buggery" are often used interchangeably to denote anal sexual intercourse, sometimes in the same legal context. See Kinsman 1987, 92, 126. Such statutes took on new meanings associated with the regulation of male homosexuality (rather than mere sodomy between men) in the late 1800s in Canada and British/British colonial contexts, and were joined at that time by more specifically anti-homosexual legislation such as "gross indecency." See Kinsman 1987, 92-94.

¹⁴ Reilly, Emma. 2008. "Military joins Pride parade." *The Toronto Star*, June 29. http://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2008/06/29/military_joins_pride_parade.html.

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Weaponization and Prisonization of Toronto's Black Male Youth

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Abstract

Informed by Galtung (1969), Anderson (2012) and Wacquant (2001), this paper argues that a lifetime of spiralling and everyday state structural violence and overtly racist criminal profiling principally targeted at young Black men living in the Toronto Community Housing Corporation prepares them for prison. Moreover, it contends that interpersonal violence, transmitted from generation to generation and producing a vicious cycle, is a manifestation of institutionalized and systemic inequity. In the context of a hypermasculine culture, young Black men are both victims and participants in a dialectic of interpersonal-structural violence. Routinely precipitated by powerful state actors and agencies of criminal justice, public policy and assorted 'moral entrepreneurs', young Black men have their masculinity weaponized and prisonized by the state's low-intensity declaration of war against them, and, among others, the poor, LGBTQ, immigrants, and First Nations and other people of colour.

Keywords: Weaponization; prisonization; the criminal black man; hypermasculinity; hyperincarceration; structural violence; social justice.

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Introduction

Against the backdrop of unfettered markets and enfeebled social-welfare programs, when the penal system has become a major engine of social stratification and cultural division in its own right, the field study of the prison ceases to be the province of the specialist in crime and punishment to become a window into the deepest contradictions and the darkest secrets of our age.
(Wacquant 2002: 389)

The weaponization and prisonization of Black youth's masculinity is embedded within state structural violence in the form of marginalization, repression, dehumanization, demonization, vilification, exploitation and other forms of discrimination. The state, in constructing harm and injury as the special province of private citizens rather than the structural nature of capitalism, criminal 'justice' and other state public policy, finds in young Black men a culturally acceptable 'condensation symbol' (Kaufer and Carley 1993) to represent a malevolent force whose being is the essence of disorder. Tamari Kitossa (2005), in his examination of the criminalization of African Canadians, referred to this characterization, redolent of the Inquisition's scapegoating of women, as 'Malleus Maleficarum Africanus'. Specifically, this inquiry demonstrates that masculinities, weaponized and prisonized through state structural violence, are articulated in narratives that originate with children born into spirals of poverty, colonialist and racist child welfare systems, the school-to-prison pipeline, maladaptive interpersonal violence, disenfranchised communities, discrimination, physical and sexual abuse, paramilitary policing, hyperincarceration and everyday racism.

This work emerges from my community praxis aimed at developing a conceptual vocabulary for understanding the violence and hypermasculinity of disenfranchised young Black men living in the Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC). These young men's lifeworlds are defined by their struggles to adapt, cope and resist normalized state structural violence (Galtung 1969)

and conditions of social death (Patterson 1982). For Galtung, 'structural violence is violence where there is no such actor' (1969: 170) as opposed to events and contexts of 'direct' or 'personal', violence. He further explains that 'structural violence is the unintended and indirect constraints impeding people from their own self-realization when those structures themselves are not natural and immutable' (1969: 169). Structural violence is abstract in nature, to the extent we are socialized to regard it as such, and not something that can be traced to particular institutions and their representatives (1969: 187). 'Violence', therefore, is not simply a function of individual proclivity but is dialectical; it is 'built into the [social] structure and shows up as unequal power and consequently as unequal life chances' (Galtung 1969: 171). While there is reason to question Galtung's concession to the liberal notion of 'life chances', the substance of his theory goes towards recognizing Herman and Julia Schwendinger's (2001) argument that racism and poverty are forms of state and societal violence, which are amplified and compounded by overpolicing and criminalization, factors which contribute to youth suffering multiple traumas. Galtung argues that both direct and structural violence create trauma: 'violence is needs-deprivation; needs-deprivation is serious; one reaction is direct violence. But that is not the only reaction. There could also be a feeling of hopelessness, deprivation/frustration syndrome shows up, coupled with apathy and withdrawal' (1969: 295). Hence, traumas are caused not only by structural disinvestment but also by amplification, as in a feedback loop, where and when some individuals react to the structural violence (including gang and interpersonal violence). Failure to offer meaningful responses to repair state and societally induced youth trauma – if indeed the state does not consider as functional the crisis conditions it has created (Kitossa 2012) – leaves young and poor Black men to carve out a worthwhile existence in ways that make sense to them, even though surrounding structures suppress adaptive responses. In a classic deconstruction of 'blaming the victim', Stanley Cohen (2007) argues that our society routinely creates problems for poor youth but then blame them for solutions they devise.

Structural violence also filters into areas of social service delivery in the form of demand for treatment of psychological disorders (which often go unattended), provision of child protection or custody, and welfare and social programs. Clearly, a 'violent structure leaves marks not only on the human body but also on the mind and spirit' (Galtung 1969: 294). Data from the 2006 census showed that, in an urban center in Ontario, Black youth represented 65 per cent of all youth in state care but the Black population represented only 8 per cent of the total (Grant and Ojo 2009: 8). Years of this type of socialization and bearing witness to these experiences leads to Black youth becoming marginalized within their 'urban iconic ghetto' (Anderson 2012).

In essence, Black youth living in the TCHC are subjected to '... state-sanctioned and/or extralegal production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerability to premature death' (Gilmore 2007: 28). This influences their feelings of despair and, although they are not wholly defeated, shapes their negative reactions to the world (Berger 2006). Furthermore, young men's health suffers in part due to this marginalization but also through persistent structural and systemic racism and psychosocial death. Scholars argue that inequitable treatment due to racism increases rates of morbidity and mortality and reduces overall feelings of well-being. Levels of discrimination vary depending on socially assigned characteristics of race or ethnicity (Ford and Airhihenbuwa 2010). I argue that this form of stigmatization and state structural violence forms, shapes and socializes working-class Black men with two types of hypermilitarized masculinities: weaponization and prisonization. Eliminating structural violence, abject poverty and racism, therefore, goes part and parcel with achieving a higher standard of health as it could encourage these men to adopt non-violent alternatives to conflict resolution (Berger 2006; Galtung 1969; Gilmore 2007).

The carceral¹ concrete living spaces and buildings that represent the physical structures of the TCHC together with the overt racialization experienced within this environment exacerbate feelings of hopelessness. I propose this

prepares Black male youth for prison and creates, by extension, exaggerated masculinities including use of weapons. Indeed, Wacquant (2008) suggests that ghettoized communities, given their enforced containment, social control and moral regulation, are effectively open-air prisons. Male peer support within the TCHC, thus, rather than offering positive supportive support roles, encourages the normalization of interpersonal violence. Because young males cannot access programs where they could develop problem-solving and anger management skills, or have community courts that resolve conflict through restorative justice, their coping abilities are limited to risk-taking, violence towards women and other males (DeKeseredy and Schwartz 2002). For some youth, living in the TCHC may feel like prison, paralyzing their abilities to comprehend life outside. This denial of opportunity is a form of psychological violence, restraining mobility like a yoke.

In 2011, family violence accounted for 26 per cent of all police-reported blue-collar violent crime (Statistics Canada 2011) and the bulk of offenders brought before the criminal justice system are racialized men (Rankin and Winsa 2013). Racialization is the process by which groups are demonized and vilified by the media, police and courts, based on race, colour, creed or ethnicity. Racialization draws attention to the process of making 'race' relevant to a particular situation or context, and thus requires an examination of the precise circumstances in which this occurs (Glynn 2014: 12). Feminist and empirical studies also indicate that children who witness violence between their parents are at an increased risk of behavioural and developmental problems and are at a greater risk of becoming victims and perpetrators of violence themselves (DeKeseredy and Schwartz 2002; Jaffe, Wolfe and Wilson 1990; O'Keefe 1998). The structural violence and trauma from these experiences contribute to the violence experienced not only by women and children in the TCHC but also among male peer groups and within homoerotic male bonding incidents.

Criminological evidence indicates that youth from impoverished or working class communities, where the absence of work and racist hostilities

undermine their respective self-worth, tend to make decisions which are extremely poor but which can be rational within their perceived context. Sabo, Kupers, and London (2001) inform us that class plays an important role in the types of crimes committed. They point out that adolescents of all classes commit crimes; however, affluent boys raised with vested futures frequently stop short of committing crimes that would land them in jail, whereas working class boys who have relatively fewer opportunities for higher education and satisfying work are disproportionately represented among the convicted (Sabo, Kupers, and London 2001: 6). In *The End of Work*, Jeremy Rifkin (2004) cites a major epidemiological study by Merva and Fowles (1996) showing that a one percent rise in unemployment, among other things, correlates with a 6.7 per cent increase in homicide and a 3.4 per cent increase in other violent offences. In essence different types of masculinities are performed within the categories of race, class and gender, as responses to particular contexts and situations. To begin to understand these communities of men, we must understand how state structural violence, social disenfranchisement, abject poverty, chronic unemployment, overpolicing, criminalization and constructed hopelessness have created a lifetime spiral into violence.

Over-policing of Black masculinity

It is said that no one truly knows a nation until one has been inside its jails. A nation should not be judged by how it treats its highest citizens, but its lowest ones. (Mandella 1995)

Toronto's Black population, according to Statistics Canada, is 6.9 per cent, with the broader category of visible minorities at 42.9 per cent (2006). According to a spokesperson of the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, typically on any given day the Black inmate population averages between 11–15 per cent (2012). Disturbingly, however, Black subgroup inmate numbers have increased every year over the last 10 years, growing by nearly 90

per cent over that period. Meantime, Caucasian inmates actually declined by 3 per cent over this same period (Sapers 2013: 9). Nevertheless, as a group, Black inmates are not more violent than other identifiable groups. Moreover, on average, Black inmates are no more likely to be serving a sentence for violent offences than the general inmate population. Given that all meaningful employment and, to some degree, educational certifications require criminal record checks, education and employment prospects are bleak for young Black men when released from prison.

Recent media reports remind us of what critical criminological and sociological literature has known for decades: that is, minority communities and socially disadvantaged neighbourhoods are over-policed for minor crime and under-policed for major crime (Crichlow and Visano 2009; Rankin 2010; Rankin and Winsa 2013). According to the United Nations Human Development Report (2011), Canada ranks as one the best counties in the world for living. However, UN Special Rapporteur on Racism, Dr Doudou Diène, noted upon his visit to Canada in 2004 that:

Canada, because of its past history, as in all the countries of North and South America, carries a heavy legacy of racial discrimination, which was the ideological prop of trans-Atlantic slavery and of the colonial system. The ideological aspect of this legacy has given rise to an intellectual mindset which, through education, literature, art and the different channels of thought and creativity, has profoundly and lastingly permeated the system of values, feelings, mentalities, perceptions and behaviours, and hence the country's culture. (Diène 2004: para 68)

This is evident within the Canadian criminal justice system's racial profiling of Black citizens. In February, 2010, Jim Rankin of the *Toronto Star* Newspaper, examined data from Toronto police contact cards in (mostly) non-criminal encounters with the public. The article highlighted a disturbing trend and points to the harrowing realities of black male overpolicing and hyperprisonization:

- If you are Black Canadian and you do something wrong or illegal, your chances of getting caught are much greater than your White counterpart;
- Black Canadians make up 8.4 per cent of Toronto's population, they account for three times as many contacts with police;
- Black Canadian males aged 15–24 are stopped and documented 2.5 times more than White males the same age; and
- Differences between Black Canadian and White carding rates are highest in more affluent, mostly White areas of the city, indicating the presence of the 'out-of-place' phenomenon.

Another *Toronto Star* investigation titled 'Known To Police' and published in March 2012 reported that, from 2008 to mid-2011, higher proportions of Black people were stopped and documented by police than White people in every one of the city's 72 patrol zones (Rankin and Winsa 2012). On average, Blacks were 3.2 times more likely to be documented than Whites and, in more affluent neighbourhoods, that likelihood can go much higher (Rankin, Bailey, Ng and Winsa 2012).

More recently, the *Toronto Star* Newspaper obtained data under freedom of information that paints a disturbing picture of Black and First Nations overrepresentation in Ontario youth and adult jails. Rankin and Winsa (2013) stated that in 2011, Black male youth made up 5 per cent of boys in Ontario but 24 per cent of male youth admitted to jail. In other words, one out of 20 boys in Ontario aged 12–17 is Black but, in that state's youth jails, Black boys represent one out of five boys. Thus, the proportion of jail admissions for Black boys is four times higher than for the average youth. Notably, although young male incarceration rates have steadily declined since the introduction of the Youth Criminal Justice Act in 2003, Black and Aboriginal boys have not enjoyed the same rate of decline as White boys.

Contextualizing the struggles of the Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC)

The TCHC living conditions shape how racism, state social violence, social determinants of health and gender performance influence outlooks on and outcomes of life. Repressive living conditions of hopelessness, joblessness, violence and police violence from living in the TCHC prepare Black and racialized youth for prison. Rapper and poet Tupac Shakur (1999) describes the young men who grow up in these living conditions as 'roses that grew from concrete' (Shakur 1999). Reiman and Leighton (1995: 7) suggest 'the media, criminal justice official and the state would like for the public to see these young men as "criminals", their race as crime, and as a resurgent dangerous Black urban underclass'. Such a view does not allow for the loving insights offered by Shakur: the possibility for the roses (youth) to grow. For these roses to emerge from concrete and survive takes resilience, agency, will-power, hope and supportive networks. Freire reminds us that:

... the idea that hope alone will transform the world, and action undertaken in that kind of naïveté, is an excellent route to hopelessness, pessimism, and fatalism. But the attempt to do without hope, in the struggle to improve the world, as if that struggle could be reduced to calculated acts alone, or a purely scientific approach, is a frivolous illusion. (Freire 1997: 8)

Toronto is home to some of Canada's largest and oldest government housing communities/projects. These properties are managed by the TCHC. Toronto also is home to some of Canada's most expensive real-estate, condominiums and property taxes. According to Harris (2003), due to 'redlining'², Canadian Blacks are less likely to obtain bank loans and own property; thus, by extension, they are more likely to rent and live in low-income communities or in government housing projects. Within the Canadian landscape, owning property is not only synonymous with economic success but is also associated with having middle- or upper-class jobs, better quality of

health, and fewer encounters with the police and other state officials. According to a United Way of Greater Toronto and the Canadian Council on Social Development (2004) report titled *Poverty by Postal Code*, racialized groups, immigrants – whether newly arrived or more established – and refugees were almost three times more likely than others to live in poverty, whether they were employed or not. About 29.5 per cent lived below the poverty line. Among immigrants, 24.0 per cent lived below the poverty line compared to an average of 11.6 per cent for non-racialized Canadians. Open Concept Consulting (2013) indicated that, in 2007, the overall Toronto poverty rate of 19.0 per cent was higher than the national rate of 14.7 per cent. Between 1980 and 2000, the poverty rate for non-racialized populations fell by 28 per cent while poverty among racialized families rose by 361 per cent (United Way of Greater Toronto and the Canadian Council on Social Development 2004). This problem is especially severe when poverty in racialized communities is considered. For the same period, the number of racialized families living in poverty in Toronto increased by 32 per cent, far greater than their population growth. Of all persons living in poverty in 2006 in three of Canada's major cities, racialized minorities comprised 41 per cent in Toronto, 18 per cent in Vancouver, and 17 per cent in Montreal (National Council of Welfare).

A subsequent (2005) United Way Toronto study prioritized 13 socially and economically disadvantaged neighbourhoods.³ These areas represent Toronto's urban underclass and, as such, the residents are marginal to the dominant culture or society. Every day they face a culture that tells them that they can never achieve or be successful in society. This is especially evident with education and racialization of criminalization. Rankin, Rushowy and Brown (2013) reported in the *Toronto Star* newspaper that:

- Black students make up only about 12 per cent of high school students in the Toronto public board – about 32,000 – yet account for more than 31 per cent of all suspensions.

- For the 2006/2007 school year, suspension rates were highest for Aboriginal students, followed by Black and mixed-race students.
- One of every seven Black Grade 7 and 8 students reported being suspended at least once. The ratio was slightly lower for high school students.

School suspensions coupled with predatory rebellious consumerism (Lipsitz 1994) among some youth creates predatory individualism, ambivalence and a fascination with gangster culture as an alternative to education and conventional jobs. Decrepit conditions of classrooms and communities, coupled with school suspensions contributes to the school-to-prison pipeline. Overcrowded classrooms, racially and socioeconomically isolated environments, a lack of effective teachers and school leaders, and insufficient funding for 'extras' such as counselors, special education services, textbooks, access to professional sporting and physical activities, ESL and daycare services to name a few (Kim, Losen and Hewitt 2010: 1) are also among recognised shortcomings. These deficiencies increase students' disengagement and push-outs that begin with the opening of a school door through expulsion or disengagement and culminate with enclosure in a prison cell. School suspensions expose some youth to a street culture in the absence of parental supervision, making them vulnerable and easy targets for the school-to prison pipeline. In essence the street gangster and prisonized subculture within TCHC projects become the new teacher/school that coaches them into believing that gangster culture is cool. Ironically, in a real sense, gangster culture, arbitrary and brutal as it can sometimes be, also provides a mutual support network and caring relationships.

Toronto's 13 priority communities are euphemistically referred to by some youth and residents as 'the hood' or 'ghetto'; by Anderson (2012) as the iconic ghetto; and by Wacquant (2008) as the hyperghetto.⁴ Living conditions create barriers to upward mobility and economic success, creating conditions for turf and street violence for limited illegal resources, conflict between residents, and fighting among members of different TCHC neighbourhoods. Experiencing

everyday police brutality, engaging in street drug hustling and being associated with non-kin violent social networks or 'gangs' is another way to understand how Black youth perform patriarchal masculinity. The war on drugs has led to paramilitary policing of young Black men living in the TCHC, accounting for higher rates of imprisonment than the national average (Rankin and Winsa 2012, 2013).

The conditions within disenfranchised communities initially germinate and then feed turf and street gangs and networks, especially where police manipulation, arrest and gang 'sweeps' create intergroup conflict and leadership and turf vacuums. Defining the term street 'gang' is problematic and consistent criminological, sociological, media and law enforcement meaning is lacking (see Becker 1963; Chettleburgh 2007; Fishman and Cavender 1998). Even more problematic is the reality that, when some have attempted to define gangs, they have focussed exclusively on the criminal Black male in disenfranchised neighbourhoods. A popular culture definition which has gangs comprised of 'hoodies' (Anderson 2012) or 'thugs' employs demonizing and fear-mongering tactics to create the Other as the alien and the criminal. For the purposes of this paper, I replace the concept of youth gang with youth street social violence and suggest that TCHC violence is intricately linked to structural violence and prison violence.

Relationship between the TCHC, prisons and jails

The socialized carceral geography of prisons (and its logic) spreads onto the TCHC, and thus far beyond the confines of gaol walls. The spatial geographies (Kirby 1996; Lefebvre 1991) instil violence as the norm for Black working class youth living within the TCHC and prepare them for the hopelessness of prison. In other words, transition to prison does not require adaption, because TCHC living conditions mentally, physically and emotionally prepare youth for life in prisons. This form of structural violence or social death

brought about by such different housing standards is not only about poverty. Rather it is about the implications of different health standards in general, educational possibilities and mortality rates (Galtung 1969: 187).

There are many similarities between the TCHC and prison/jail social structural violence. Both have units, floors and apartments; limited space between neighbours/inmates; rooms for one person, yet families/inmates share small activity spaces; everyday traumas; absence of effective rehabilitation; ineffective care of physical disabilities; elements of gang subculture and violence; concrete playgrounds and iron bars but no green spaces; limited access to services; limited access to fresh food and groceries; canteen junk food services; state social and structural violence as a daily occurrence; fragile relationships; state disinvestment for social services; limited access to political, legal and cultural redress; and personal safety issues – weapons, gang activity, rape, harassment, overpolicing, rampant racism, sexism and homophobia.

Panoptic surveillance of inmates and TCHC residents need not always be experienced in order to be socially controlled. This is because self-monitoring and self-consciousness occurs with TCHC residents and inmates alike once they have been exposed to surveillance (police, courts, prisons/jails and state welfare) through the internalization of state structural violence (Galtung 1969). Power is no longer on the body but on the minds of all TCHC residents and inmates, to look out for themselves and to be self-policed at all times. In essence they both experience being continually under suspicion by authorities, while state social violence instil internalized fear that keeps them 'in their place'.

Weaponization and prisonization marriage

Men's prisons and youth male social violence present key opportunities for the expression and reproduction of hegemonic masculinity (Parenti 2008; Sabo, Kupers and Willie London 2001). Prisonized masculinity is a learned response to

hegemonic masculinity (Connell 1987), both inside and outside prisons. Sabo also maintained that there is a silence around gender and prison masculinities, partly because prisoners seldom talk about it. Moreover, Sabo argues that 'the hardness-softness dichotomy echoes and fortifies stereotypes of masculinity and femininity' (Sabo 1994: 168). Masculinities that express hardness revolve around a male code for acting tough, being prepared to fight, choosing social death over social life, avoiding intimacy, minding one's own business, avoiding feminine behaviours, suffering in silence, and never admitting you are afraid, among other characteristics (Kupers 1999: 18-22; Sabo et al. 2001).

Weaponized and prisonized masculinities contribute to the confinement and debasement experienced by those living in the TCHC. Life before prison closely resembles life within prison for some; hence there is an easy transition into a prisonized masculinity when incarcerated. Negative stereotypes of Black men as savage and animal-like are constantly portrayed in the media and popular culture and play a role in weaponizing their masculine identities. Prisonization only adds to these damaging effects and portrayals that some Black men internalize as norms about themselves. Burdened by the injuries of class, racism and masculinity, some, despite the prospects of being 'roses in concrete', lose sight of their human worth and become caught in a web of constructed hopelessness about life and their futures. Again citing Shakur (1999), some believe they are born to die.

The prisonization of Black masculinity as practice and performance is heightened and celebrated upon release from prison back to their original spaces as subjects within and of the TCHC. Kirby (1996: 11) argues that the 'space and where we are in it, determines a large portion of our status as subjects, and obversely, the kinds of subjects we are largely dictates our degree of mobility and our possible future locations'. In other words, in the absence of educational and effective rehabilitative social programs which could provide a foundation for youth to have a vested interest in their communities and society

at large, the TCHC and prison socialization encourages gang formations and the misdirection of masculine exuberance.

Prisonized masculinity is not a smooth transition to manhood or adult life; it is fraught with a socialized, policed and disciplined form of patriarchal and violent masculinities. Emphasis is placed on a façade of toughness, hyper-masculinity, street-smart skills and surviving daily repressive and brutal police violence. Anderson (1999: 72) argues that this 'street code' is typically learned in childhood and, by the time they are teenagers, youth have internalized the street culture and understand the status, respect and violence that accompany it, sometimes with fatal consequences. For many men, crime may serve as a suitable resource for showing that they are manly. Black street prisonized masculinity is shaped by discipline, enslavement and toughness coupled with the ability to use violence learned from within prison and early childhood socialization. In essence, it is a learned and weaponized response to hegemonic masculinity, both inside and outside prisons, that becomes the survival code of the street and the accepted way of doing masculinity.

As Anderson has noted, the code of the street and street-smart skills is an informal system governing the use of violence, particularly among Black working class youth. It emphasizes that one must be on guard, while maintaining and demanding respect from others through a violent and tough identity, and a willingness to exact retribution in the event of disrespect, being 'rolled on', or physically assaulted (Anderson 1999: 73). Employing Anderson's code of the street frame of reference, one could argue that Black working class youth's performance of masculinity or 'theblackmale'⁵ body, is an everyday street weapon: always ready, always guarded by toughness and aggression as protection from violence (1999: 130). Aggression and violence must be constantly maintained in the face of systemic disrespect and stigmatization with minimal expectations of success. There is limited police efficacy against and in some cases complicity in the drug trade. Police routinely arrest for 'suspicious' behaviors. Simply living in the TCHC is equated with suspicion. As Anderson

rightly notes, in some disadvantaged neighbourhoods, simply walking the street and going outside of one's home requires that one 'adopt the code of the street' as armour and to protect others from messing with them (Anderson 1999: 92). The TCHC is a disadvantaged area that requires emotional armour, a troubling and saddening hypervalorization of the hard, tough, strong, invincible, young Black male. A man develops without a relationship to the pain he is experiencing; always ready for battle, he refuses any form of emotional tenderness, while being overly committed to his violent persona.

Just as in prison where some of these men have used their bodies to display strength and prisonized masculinity to be feared, TCHC compounds become another site for such bodily prisonized display. The prison demands 'survival of the fittest' and gangster culture within the TCHC demands the same Social Darwinism, as bodies spill out from prison into the TCHC and from the TCHC into prison. Further, many within the gangster and prisonized subculture shape the way the law sees them and law is essentially a product of culture.

Within the Canadian context, young Black men living in the TCHC are socialized by these men who act as their mentors, keeping a legacy of enslaved prisonized mentality alive among the youth. Similarly in the United States, where many Black Canadian men look for (representations of) African American role models, among Black youth:

- one in three African-American boys born in 2001 stands a lifetime risk of going to jail (American Leadership Forum cited in Alexander 2010);
- in 2007, one in every 15 Black children had a parent in prison;
- there are more African-American men in prison, on probation or on parole in the US now than there were enslaved in 1850 (Alexander 2010);
- Because felons lose the right to vote, more African-American men were disenfranchised in 2004 than in 1870, the year male franchise was secured (Alexander 2010).

A study by Reiman and Leighton (1995) is grounded in the actual living conditions of disenfranchised communities where chronic youth unemployment combines with abject poverty and the stigma of demonized racialization. Gaynes (1993) has described this situation for young Black males as: Young + Black + Male = Criminal Suspect. It is not uncommon to hear young men who socialize within the street subculture of violence and illegal activity internalize this equation. They then develop and echo woefully constructed, distorted, hopeless peer views that hustling, being incarcerated, committing acts of robbery, and participating in gangs provide alternatives to postsecondary institutions for graduation and diplomas.

Gary Younge (2012), writing for *The Guardian*, tells the story of a young man whose entire family of males are, or have been, incarcerated. For Jeffery Gamble:

... the luckiest day of his life was when his car hit the kerb at the corner of Jefferson and National in Los Angeles while he was drunk-driving. It flew over a fence, falling 80ft into a creek below, leaving him with a broken neck and paralysed. 'If I hadn't had that accident, I would be dead – or in jail for the rest of my life, just like my brothers', says Gamble, 47. (Younge 2012)

Prison, for the Gambles, is as common a destination as university might be for a middle-class family. His two brothers are both in jail. Ricky, who was convicted for burglary and assault with a firearm under the three strikes law, is in for 110 years to life. Mike got life without parole for the murder of a local councillor. His father was in jail for a series of alcohol-related offences.⁶ His son, Khalif, has also been in jail for dealing drugs and possession.

Vale de Almedia, writing on masculinity in Portugal (1995) alongside Chevanne (2001), Reddock (2003) and Crichlow (2004, 2012) writing on masculinity in the Caribbean, points out how patriarchy places prestige, pride and power in the symbolic capital of masculinity and encourages men to be

family providers. The gendered expectations and nature of male work to provide for family places extra pressure on men to show and see their strengths as hypermale providers and not failures or effeminate men. Sometimes the only way to provide for one's family is through creative and productive activities of gang and drug life. In essence, for some, participating in gangs, hustling and being incarcerated are almost rites-of-passage, badges of honour, that ensure their prisonized and militarized hypermasculinities will translate to power and respect. According to Anderson (1999) and Sampson and Lauritsen (1994), violence in disenfranchised neighbourhoods is used as a tool for gaining respect, controlling the turf and gaining credibility among peers of similar minds. Anderson (1999: 131) also observed that some youth deliberately look for fights to build street respect, to inform others who they are. Likewise, Wilkinson (2001) found that young men committed acts of robberies to secure their masculinist hypermasculinity, while impressing other youth. Given that masculinity and competitiveness go hand in hand, hustling in turn informs how these young men will perform or imitate prisonized masculinity.

Julius Lester (1969) defines the practice of hustling which exemplifies the life practice of Black youth weaponized and prisonized masculinities in the ghettos:

... in actuality, many blacks have consciously rebelled against the system and 'dropped out'. After all, why waste your life working at a job you hate, getting paid next to nothing, when you make more money with half the effort. So, a new class is created, the hustler who gambles, runs numbers, pushes drugs, lives off women, and does anything to avoid going to 'meet the man' five days a week, year in and year out. It is dangerous, rough, and a none too beautiful life, but it has some compensation: A modicum of self-respect and the respect of a good segment of the community is gained. (Lester 1969: 11)

Prisonized and weaponized masculinities is characterized by the sagging baggy pants which youth see as challenging authority, police, parents, societal

dress-codes and school officials. Black youth's hypermasculine prisonized performance, through themes of gun play, sexual prowess, body tattoos, piercings, and shaved heads, is symbolic of stylistic resistance and is a reflection of how thug life functions within and outside prison walls. It is not uncommon, then, for law officials to use the culture of resistance, its symbolic representation and themes as evidence to be admitted in gang trials. This was most evident in murder trial of Mitchell Celise, age 17. The three-month trial included more gang evidence than ever before admitted in a Toronto courtroom, including six *YouTube* videos, scores of text messages, rap lyrics, jailhouse letters, photos of graffiti and tattoos, and testimony from gang and handwriting experts (Powell 2012).

The revolving circulation of Black men from prison to the TCHC and the iconic ghetto, (Anderson 2012) and the transfer of culture from father to son, create a 'normalized' understanding of a hypermasculinist weaponized, prisonized, and paranoid masculinities that become contagiously exciting and titillating to younger Black men through socialization. Youth social violence or gang culture and the everyday performativity of hyper- and prisonmasculinity in the TCHC socialize other young men into doing masculinity as learned violence.

Black youth socialization into state structural violence, hypermasculinist aggression, and toughness, is a recipe for becoming desensitized to pain and, by extension, for the development of morbid pleasure as entertaining and normative. As a consequence street youth then take pride in owning firearms, acting tough and weaponizing their masculinity. The gun has become prized as a symbol of masculine power but also as a lethal weapon leading to increasing death rates among the blackmales.

Years of guns and social death

Hong cited in Cacho (2012) reminds us:

... when the alternative to social value is social death, and social death means brutally exacerbated conditions of racialized violence, incarceration, and coercion, the allure of legibility is undeniably difficult to resist. Indeed, imagining a politics based on the refusal of social value is an impossible, unthinkable option, one, in truth, outside of any available notion of the political. (Cacho 2012: 31)

In Toronto 2005 was named as the year of the gun after a young woman named Jane Creba was accidentally shot while shopping on Boxing Day. In that year there were a total of 232 shooting incidents, 196 persons shot and 55 killed (Weinreb 2005). The year of the gun among this city's disenfranchised communities can also be called the year of youth 'social death' (Gordon 2011; Hong 2009; Patterson 1982), a condition where Black youth are still not seen as human and Blacks are constructed as a dangerous class by the state. According to Francis (2013):

Conceptually social death captures hierarchies of difference and manipulation of power within the confines of slavery. The enslaved are conscripted by institutional domination of slavery, but it does not curb their attempts to remake their quotidian lives even if the end result is failure within a greater systematic frame. (Francis 2013: 4)

Vigil and Yun (2002) in their study of youth gangs created a cross-cultural theory to explain why racialized youth join gangs in Los Angeles. Vigil and Yun's (2002) hypothesis on cross-cultural theory describes how unattended social problems within families, schools, and community lead some racialized and socially disadvantaged families to street and prison socialization and gang involvement (Vigil and Yun 2002: 161). Applying the framework of Vigil and Yun (2002) to the TCHC, Toronto's neighbourhood gangs prey on racially marginalized youth who are susceptible to recruitment due to the economically and socially disadvantaged spaces they occupy in urban life.

Criminological evidence (Miller 1980; Sabo, Kupers and London 2001; Vigil and Yun 2002) indicates clearly that youth from impoverished communities are more prone to making extremely poor decisions. This was apparent at the Danzig Street barbecue party shooting in Scarborough, Ontario where Shyanne Charles and Joshua Yasay were killed and 23 others wounded on 16 July 2012 (Taddese, Ferenc and Fernandez-Blance 2012). The *Toronto Star* crime reporting files state that 31 people were shot in the city in the six days prior to the Danzig street barbecue party. Summer of 2012 will go down as the 'year of the gun and gang violence' among Toronto's Black youth (Taddese et al. 2012). The street code of killing and shooting is particularly entrenched among hard-core, street-oriented youth who are willing to risk dying violently rather than allow themselves to be 'dissed' or victimized (Anderson 1999: 92). The code of the street emerges where police protection ends in the name of social death, where residents avoid calling the police for major crime problems because 'a man goes for himself, takes up for himself, and calls on no one else to fight his battles' (Anderson 1999: 307).

The decades since the 1980s are often referred to as the decades of street gangs, youth social violence and years of the gun and youth social death (Becker 1963; Chambliss 1999; Parenti 2008; Zatz 1987). As a response to the shootings of 2005, the increase in rates of violence involving firearms and other weapons, and the decrease in perceived community safety, the Ministry of Children and Youth Services (2011) announced the Youth Opportunities strategies.

Bill C-10: Racializing weaponization

... life and death for Black youth are linked in complicated ways and nowhere more so than in the extent to which racism explains not just who becomes a prisoner – almost everywhere and at all

times the poor, dissidents, and racial and ethnic and religious minorities – but also what the prisoner becomes. Imprisonment is a medium of racialized state-craft and prisoners are usually, and definitely in the United States, considered in law and social practice an inferior race in and of themselves. (Gordon 2011: 17)

Racism and in particular antiblack racism linked to crime is a reality within Canadian society. Auditing Canada's history allows for a deeper analysis and understanding, starting with its legacy of legalized slavery, state racism and authorized racial discrimination (Walker 1997; Winks 1997). Canadians have always used law to control, contain and subordinate members of racial, gendered and sexual minority groups – for example, through the Canada Immigration and Protection Act under the offices of Canada Border Service Association: Detention and Removals Program.⁷ In a like fashion, on 20 September, 2011, the conservative government tabled Bill C- 10, an omnibus bill titled the Safe Streets and Communities Act. Bill C-10 proposes to make fundamental changes to criminal law. The Bill combines amendments from nine separate bills that had failed to pass in previous sessions of parliament. Bill C-10 proposes to make fundamental changes to almost every component of Canada's criminal justice system.

Bill C-10 has been put forward as legislation to make 'streets, families and communities safer' (Department of Justice Canada 2011). The Bill removes discretion with respect to sentencing from judges to Crown prosecutors. Prosecutors will now have the power to proceed, dismiss, or stay a charge to which a mandatory minimum sentence is attached (Department of Justice Canada 2011). Research suggests that this discretion will be exercised to the disadvantage of Black young Canadians, in particular TCHC youth (African Canadian Legal Clinic 2012; Gordon 2011: 17; Lewis 1992).

Within the Canadian context, antiblack racism is an ideological political campaign used against Black men as a tool for voter support or winning the

ballot with a tough-on-crime agenda, employed by political parties on the right. At the same time as they reinforce candidates' colonial power, antiblack racist political campaigns absolve the actual centers of power from addressing the conditions and structural violence that cause Black youth social violence and the reasons why they are frustrated with the system. By not addressing the inequities, racialization, racial profiling, political disenfranchisement and injustices they experience, the state demonizes them. In essence antiblack racism is about demonization of Black youth street violence.

Bill C-10 attempts to tell the Canadian public that society and, in particular, urban centers are slipping into a crisis (see Hall et al. 1978). But Bill C-10 does not inform the public that the race crime-youth nexus is about an attack on racialized urban black youth and the construction of the criminal as a 'the black male', often stereotyped as of Jamaican Caribbean heritage. Bill C-10 does not but should ask, according to Hall et al. (1978: viii): To what social contradictions does this trend towards the disciplined society or 'safe street', powered by the fears mobilised around mugging, really refer? What social forces are constrained and contained by its construction? What forces stand to benefit from it? What role has the state played in its construction? What real fears and anxieties is it mobilising? The intention of and reaction to Bill C-10 is clear: mass prisonization, paramilitary policing and the creation of a 'prison nation' (Davis 2005; Herivel and Wright 2003); and over-incarceration of Black male youth who are already over represented in the Ontario prison system (Rankin and Winsa 2013). Bill C-10 will allow for the policing of TCHC communities as an occupying force (Baldwin 1966). It will restrict their ability to move outside of the criminal justice system and the TCHC, where most of the gang activity is presently occurring, by creating a symbiotic relationship over time with prison and the TCHC for younger generations to come. Children who have seen their older family members and friends being restricted from taking part in civic society due to criminalization and criminal convictions are likely to follow the same path.

Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to develop a conceptual understanding of the cycles of violence Black youth living in Toronto's urban iconic ghetto, the Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC), experience as participants and victims. Carceral geography and the social symbiotic relationship between life in the TCHC and experiences of everyday state structural violence, abject poverty and hyperincarceration shape the limited life chances of Black males. State structural violence is further compounded by over-policing and racial profiling as a response to the moral panic around Black youth blue-collar street crime. Due to widespread pleabargaining, these criminalization processes result in disproportionate numbers of poor Blacks in prison. This is structural violence. Young Black men have been anaesthetized and socialized with state structural violence and have become compulsive consumers of violence and selfdestruction. Thus a whole set of young Black men in the TCHC – through their demonization, criminalization and vilification – are akin to prostitutes, refugees, disenfranchised youth and newly arrived racialized immigrant groups; they are essentially social nonpersons (Patterson 1982: 5)

This paper argues that a 'prison' isn't confined to the acres where correctional facilities stand; rather, carceral geography (and its logic) spread far beyond the confines of the prison walls. For a segment of Toronto's Black urban under-class and marginalised youth living in Toronto's TCHC, the primary structuring factors and institutions (Prisons, Capitalism, Corporations, and the State) influence their prisonized and weaponized masculinities. Prisonization, overpolicing and the war on drugs take this process and cast it beyond the individual 'identity' to the spaces where people live and what those spaces assume, allow and constrain. To paraphrase Wacquant (2001), there is a deadly symbiosis when ghetto and prison life meet and mesh; the challenge is to break the symbiosis for young Black men who have been cast out as our urban underclass. One trap of this deadly symbiosis is the ways in which Black bodies

are policed differently, especially for marijuana possession charges. Alexander (2010) and Reiman and Leighton (1995) call for decriminalization and or legalization of marijuana to allow poor people to trade legally and make comfortable incomes for themselves and their families, a daily ritual for some living in disenfranchised communities. They could then learn to develop formal business skills, develop critical literacy, and create a generation of legal business entrepreneurs. This could be where we begin to undo some of the structural violence that has destroyed the analytic abilities of these young Black men and limited their capacities to unlearn violence, by invoking a part of their life narrative as ritual and rehabilitative.

Long overdue is a commitment to projects that promote caring, love, respect and multiple forums for literacy and art focussed especially at those living on the margins of our urban underclass. Culturally relevant and culturally meaningful programing and educational engagement with subsequent employment opportunities can also work to deter youth from gang associations and develop their sense of worth, pride, esteem, confidence and resilience. Some of the best teachers and mentors for socially disadvantaged youth are youth themselves. Transforming their weaponized and prisonized masculinities will require nothing short of a drastic metamorphosis and counter hegemonic revolution in consciousness and action.

¹ 'The concept of a carceral archipelago (meaning a prison consisting of a series of islands) appears in social theorist Michel Foucault's work on surveillance systems and their technologies over modern societies and its practice of social control and discipline over its population in all areas of social life. Taken from his work *Discipline and Punish: Birth of the Prisons* (1975), modelled on the principle of and related to the nation state, and ideally employed on the idea of an incarceration system producing society's need for prisons, it employs physical boundaries to gain control of urban space' (Wikipedia 2014)

² Redlining is the practice, in the American social system, of denying, or charging more for services such as banking, insurance, access to health care or even supermarkets, or denying jobs to residents in particular areas which are often racially determined.

³ Toronto's 13 priority neighbourhoods are: Scarborough Village; Eglinton East/Kennedy Park; Weston–Mt. Dennis; Lawrence Heights; Steeles–L'Amoreaux; Jane–Finch; Westminister–Branson; Flemingdon Park/Victoria Village; Dorset Park; Jamestown; Malvern; Kingston–Galloway; Crescent Town (United Way of Greater Toronto 2005).

⁴ The coupling of the transformed core of the urban Black Belt, or hyperghetto, and the fast expanding carceral system was fortified by two concurrent series of changes that have tended to 'prisonize' the ghetto and to 'ghettoize' the prison (Wacquant 2001: 103).

⁵ I use the concepts 'thecriminalblackman', 'theblackmale' and or 'thecriminalblackmale' to describe a racist, harrowing and upsetting human condition. These state, police, media and popular culture constructs and concepts have succeeded in anaesthetizing the Canadian public imagination into accepting and contributing to the hypervilification, hyperdemonization, hypercriminalization, and hyperincarceration of young Black males. This does not mean that one should not also think seriously about what is happening to young Black women and LGBTQ youth in the TCHC in relation to structural violence and criminal injustice.

⁶ In conversation with a Director from the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services Toronto, he informed me that not only are gangs a concern for prisoner safety but the concurrent incarceration of fathers, sons, and brothers is also a security issue. He said in some cases they all share or are housed in the same prison cell which is an increased concern for prisoner family safety.

⁷ Under Immigration Refugee & Protection Act SC (2002), foreign nationals and permanent residents can be detained if the officer is satisfied that any of the following situations exist: the individual poses a danger to the public; there is reason to believe they will not appear for immigration proceedings; their identity cannot be confirmed; or they are believed to be inadmissible for security reasons or because of human or international rights violations (Canadian Border Services Agency 2010).

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Engaging Men: Reflections on CariMAN and the Journey to the Gender Table

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Key words: Behaviour change, gender equality, empowerment, masculinity, human rights

How does one constructively engage men in discussions about masculinity, gender, human rights and equality?

Where does one start when some of them think like:

The Angry Misogynist: – "women have taken away what is mine/ they are to blame/ there is a price to be paid";

The Wounded Warrior: – "I am not being allowed to exercise my authority/ use my strength/ be a man/ save those I care about";

The Displaced Dad: – "I care for my child and want to contribute/my rights have been taken away/ my baby mother is using me/ the system is against fathers";

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The **Righteous Reverser**: – "my God, religious beliefs, spiritual and personal identity are being challenged/ we must go back to fundamentals – the way we were/ end times are here and I must do what is right";

The **Perturbed Patriarch**: – "I am confused about our roles as men and women/ I see the problems of inequality/ I want the best for my daughter/this feels like a demotion to equality/it is too complicated/ I just try to avoid thinking about these things";

and the **Recovering Patriarch**: – "I understand that gender equality will be a win-win situation / I realize I need to change / I am trying but with some things I just don't get it right/ sometimes if I wonder if it's possible, if it's worth all this".

These profiles are really just among the many that exist and are the tips of the icebergs when considering developing interventions to change behaviour.

It is therefore necessary to consider the following: Will what works for one work for all, or are unique interventions sometimes needed? Should one even try with some of them? Is it worth the use of the resources? Do these men need spaces to allow authentic ventilation and critical discussion of their attitudes and beliefs? Who should facilitate these and who should be present? Will one be compromising ones principles and/or will one be seen as doing so if one shares spaces with the misogynists? And what will our partners in the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women think of these associations, especially if they are not always invited into the spaces? Who is "us" and who is "them"?

Invitations to the Gender Table: Deciding on the guest list

Some of these conflicting positions regarding engaging men were highlighted recently during discussions generated as a result of the "Barbershop

Conference" announced by the governments of Iceland and Suriname at the recent UN General Assembly where it was proposed that "men will talk with men about gender equality". The problem was that women were to be excluded from these fora! As would be expected, this was seen by many working for gender equality and empowerment of women as being discriminatory and another example of the privileging of the patriarchal process. Should there be spaces for men alone? Is this discriminatory and merely more privileging of men?

A number of influential organizations refused to participate if women were excluded from any sessions. So women were included. But was this the most beneficial outcome?

At the launch of the Male Action Network, which later became CariMAN, (<http://www.cariman.org>), in Jamaica in 2006 we tried to pre-empt the disruption these issues could cause in what we saw as a potentially constructive process. We began with a Plenary open to all, then had a Session for Men (to discuss issues we knew they might not share in an open forum), which were then reported at a final open Plenary with a panel of women representing Feminists and Gender Equality advocates who commented on the issues coming out of the prior session.

Then the real conversations began!!

It set the stage for a model for interventions and for the partnerships with organizations of women and men that have facilitated the growth of CariMAN in the region. It seemed to us at CariMAN to be a strategic way to use these spaces to facilitate the process. We felt then, and still do now, that men do need spaces to talk among themselves and that these are sometimes the only ways that they will express themselves and share beliefs and attitudes that may not be politically correct but will serve as points of entry for therapeutic intervention.

As a psychotherapist and health promotion consultant I have learnt that, whether working with a couple, a family, a community or doing post-traumatic interventions with organizations, there are times when people need to work in separate homogeneous groups and other times when there is more power in one heterogeneous group. The expert therapist or facilitator will know when and how to make these decisions and when and how to address and mediate any corollary messages that could result. There must be a balance between the politics of philosophy and the process of behaviour change intervention.

Male mindsets: effective interventions

Among the challenges we face when developing programmes to engage men as advocates for gender equality and social justice, in both private and public spheres, are first the acknowledgement and appreciation of the diversity of masculinities, the stages of the change process, as well as the design and implementation of interventions that will influence the behaviour of these men.

Interventions at the level of the state, policies, laws etc are only part of the solution. For behaviour change to take place there must be a concomitant shift in beliefs, values, and attitudes. These mindsets, motivations and missions require targeted interventions and must include promoting productive partnerships with women. This requires change for all of us already at the Gender Table as well as those we wish to influence, and ideally invite to join us.

CariMAN ,The Caribbean Male Action Network (www.cariman.org) initially focused on influencing the "mindsets" of men and boys and the creation of spaces for the collaboration necessary for more effective interventions to promote healthy lifestyles. After a decade and several partnerships with UNWomen, UNFPA, academic colleagues and others, CarMAN is now the regional representative of MenEngage, <http://menengage.org/regions/caribbean/>, which engages men and boys as advocates of Gender Equality.

CariMAN now sees itself as an agent for gender equality and social justice in the region and an advocate for the relevant issues of concern to men.

Our mission is to “engage Caribbean men in the examination of existing beliefs and norms, the promotion of respect for diversity and the development of new paradigms and competencies, thus creating opportunities to negotiate new relationships in order to achieve gender justice, social harmony and peaceful partnerships”.

Our challenge is not only to know where the men and boys we work with are “at” in terms of values, attitudes and behaviour but to find ways to meet them there and initiate constructive and therapeutic conversations. We couldn’t only include in “us” men who already espoused all the principles. How would we be able to influence “them”? In any case we did not want to get trapped by that binary.

CariMAN developed interventions that could engage some of our target audiences in ways that would facilitate constructive conversations rather than adversarial confrontations. For example, men who were Righteous Reversers were invited to look at some of the ways in which their religious teachings were being misinterpreted, and to consider other passages with alternate messages. Perturbed Patriarchs were asked to describe the problematic behaviours and characteristics of the young men and women and then to identify the ways they would want them to be different. Invariably this would lead to an examination of an agreement that certain qualities normally desirable for women were also desirable for men and vice versa. All without preaching or giving a lecture on gender and gender roles and without the blame and the shame game that dis-engages so many men who venture to the gender table.

An awareness of the predictable posturing and cognitive processes has consistently allowed our interventions to move beyond the initial defensive

stance to increased awareness and willingness to explore alternate ways of understanding.

Us, Them: Meeting Men and Women Where They Are

This constructive process of identification with gender equality and partnership with women also brought us face to face with some of the challenges of inclusiveness and authenticity as advocates and change agents. A diversity of gendered values, attitudes and beliefs had to be addressed among the CariMAN team even as we attempted to present a united front in our efforts at advocacy. This forced us to look more closely not only at the destination we had envisioned but also at the journey to get there and our role.

It was clear that we needed to be male role models, but the fact that the men of CariMAN are more likely to be "Recovering Patriarchs" in need of peer support and guidance along this stage of our life journey than "evolved beyond patriarchy" meant this could be an important dimension of our role as models of men trying to change. For some men this meant becoming vulnerable because espousing these views and behaving differently meant that one no longer had the support of some of one's peers and in fact would now be seen by some as a traitor and worse, an issue I discussed in a TedX talk in 2012 entitled Transforming Caribbean Masculinity,

<http://m.youtube.com/watch?v=FyVqKydor9U>

Balancing Acts and Backlash

This evolving dynamic had an external and reciprocal effect on those who had a vested interest in maintaining — and those who were committed to changing — the gender *status quo*, both watching us with "jaundiced eyes".

There were those groups who automatically assumed, without evidence, that any men's organization must be driven by a patriarchal need to return men to positions of privilege and power. Some expected us to "mash up everything" if we were ever let in and allowed to sit at the gender table. We also learnt, sometimes the hard way, that even those we felt knew and understood CariMAN's position were still hyper vigilant and think of women working with men on gender equality as a high-risk endeavour. There were also, of course, valid concerns that scarce resources might become allocated to work with men and boys when so much still needed to be done for women and girls.

Of course the other lesson learned reflected the sad validity of some of these concerns. As CariMAN came to understand the landscape of individuals and organizations working with Caribbean men, we began to see just how many men and women really do hold fast to conservative and reactionary views with regard to the relative roles of men and women.

It became apparent that there were other groups of men actively, and sometimes covertly, working to promote and recruit others to support and act in accordance with these patriarchal beliefs.

Table Etiquette: Processes, Probation and Progress

For some of the men of CariMAN it was a strange new world with new roles, rituals and responsibilities. To gain acceptance as partners and not provocateurs, a certain posture, a particular interpersonal stance, particular language and circumscribed topics seemed necessary to build trusting relationships. We had observed how some of our international partners negotiated these perilous areas and so were not unfamiliar with these dynamics and were willing to be mentored.

These were and continue to be challenging times as for some of us it seemed that these new rituals and *modus operandi* might preclude authenticity and genuine conversations about the issues we knew needed to be addressed,

to be on the table. Others began to understand that for change to take place existing rituals and paradigms needed to be challenged, despite the resulting discomfort of feeling, for example, as if one is on probation, or that one could lose the safety net of affiliation. So important in these challenging times.

The CariMAN team understands the need for this probationary period and, as importantly, understands the challenges to be faced in this social and economic era. What we also know is that men must work together. And we must work with women. We have to resist the trumping power of our need for affiliation and for acceptance by our male peers over our desire to facilitate gender equality and social justice. This regression to the norm of the majority of peers prevents the changes required for gender equality! When values conflict we have to work through the cognitive dissonance and mixed feelings individually and collectively if we are to find new paradigms and healthy solutions. There is power in positive peer pressure. We need to learn how to create spaces and processes to facilitate it. This we feel is important work for CariMAN and our partners.



Commentary on Men, Violence and Crime

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Key words: UN Women, masculinity, economy, social exclusion, race, gender

The nexus of crime, drug trafficking, gangs, violence and masculinity highlighted by the report "No time to Quit: Engaging Youth at Risk"¹ gives reason for pause as this report seeks to lend support to national efforts to get to the root of, and to develop solutions to, the complexity of young male violence and criminality

The increasing focus of governments in the Caribbean region and globally on a citizen security agenda, which is often articulated as drugs and arms interdiction and the control of organized crime, makes the urgency of understanding root causes and solutions ever more apparent.

As the report emphasizes, the intersection of masculinity, economy, social exclusion, race and gender lend to a complication of contributing factors and formal and informal institutional arrangements which propel us to question male violence and criminality as a multi-layered dynamic.

In this dynamic relatively fixed gender roles place expectations on men to be providers in a system of economic arrangements in which young black men, in particular, face varied degrees of exclusion from access to economic power and resources. While organized crime for these young men may be seen as an

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illegitimate means to a legitimate end, i.e. fulfillment of their masculine role, statistics which indicate higher rates of poverty among women and children, and that the responsibility for both financial and emotional care of children lies disproportionately with women, speak to the need to better understand dominant masculinities as multi-faceted, fluid constructions.

Where the qualities of provider, protector and authority figure lie in opposition to those of nurturer on the continuum of dominant masculinities, this serves to reinforce male absence from the home and the care of children. This continuum also helps to sanction the use of violence (including armed violence) as a resource to gain economic power and control, and as a mechanism to establish and maintain control over women, children and non-conforming males.

Viewing organized crime as an alternative societal institution enables us to question why the benefits of organized crime and involvement in other illegal activities by young men serves to contribute to definitions of masculine identity in which the roles of provider, protector and authority figure are significant but not the only part of the masculinity equation.

In addition to the expectations of the performance of violence and aggression that accompany crime, might not the resources gained from, and comradery of, organized crime and gang membership also allow for the fulfillment of the desires of youth in ways that current social institutions to which they belong, do not? The resources of crime allow for access to technology, social networking, exposure to interesting new spaces and worlds, opportunities to learn, to access the latest kit (clothing and accessories) and generally opportunity to engage in play and consumer culture in ways that would otherwise be restricted in environments of poverty, unemployment, and social exclusion.

If then the problem of young black male involvement in crime, drugs and illegal activities is a function of gender, age and economics, where do the solutions lie, even if these solutions are not immediate or linear? What opportunities are there to challenge the current citizen security paradigms in which crime prevention interventions, including those related to addressing violence against women and girls, are based?

Jackson Katz discusses the importance of male leadership in the process of movement toward positive masculinities. He raises a critical question. If male leadership is not part of changing the conversation about violent and harmful masculinity in parliaments, schools, police stations, faith-based organizations, homes, the armed forces and business places, then we remain in a space of “othering” young black men who choose crime as their means to an end, or alternatively in a space of “do as I say and not as I do”. The success of the journey towards change is then the difference between negative reinforcement by example at one extreme end of the spectrum, passive bystander in the middle and the active leader of a process of change at the other end of the spectrum.

Positive, active male leadership is rooted in accountability. Accountability of men in positions of power and authority to challenge existing ways of using power and privilege that alienate and divide instead of endearing and uniting. It also means accountability in challenging the many forms of violent, discriminatory and degrading behaviour toward women, children and men who do not fit within the dominant male ideal. Positive active male leadership means surrendering the benefits of individual and collective privilege which create hierarchies and enclaves to ways of sharing power with women and other men which support equality, non-discrimination and inclusion.

Positive active male leadership at all levels of social and cultural organization is therefore the first step in addressing the nexus of men, violence and crime, because positive active male leadership is centred in active rethinking and remaking of the relationship between masculinity and power at

the individual, inter-relational, and community level. It is not rooted in the premise that the solutions to crime and violence lie within or at the intersection of sectoral mandates, policies or initiatives, but that these solutions lie in the heart of every man, in every man's commitment to his own transformation and progressive action.

The benefit of positive active male leadership therefore is the transformation of values, attitudes, beliefs, behaviours and relationships which in turn positively impact changes at the level of social institutions' practices and policies, informing shifts in national ideologies and discourses. This fluid, non-linear process has implications not only for the definition of individual masculine identity but for social institutions which have historically been organized according to patriarchal ways of understanding power, social structures and relationships.

Essentially then solutions to the nexus of men, violence and crime which was previously linked to gender, age and economy are located within the ability of male leaders in partnership with women to engage in efforts to actively transform individual and collective spheres of influence. These opportunities offer the possibility and hope for changes in modes of economic organization, social relations, social support systems and networks, and spaces for the growth, development and exploration of young people which are not dependent on the use of violence and which are not supported by the logic of crime.

Over the past decade, UN Women Multi-Country Office (MCO) for the Caribbean has led the engagement of men and boys as leaders and key partners in efforts to end violence against women and girls. This strategic focus on the engagement of men and boys is a key component of UN Women's overall efforts to support a gender responsive citizen security agenda in the Caribbean region. The Partners for Peace court-mandated perpetrator accountability programme developed by UN Women in collaboration with a team of regional experts, is currently operational in five Caribbean countries. UN

Women MCO has also been one of the main supporters of the Caribbean Male Action Network (CARIMAN) — a male-run network which focuses on building positive masculinities, and building the capacity of men to work together toward the achievement of more gender equitable societies. Community-level social mobilization efforts which utilize innovative strategies, culture and the arts to engage a range of stakeholders, including faith-based organizations, media, law enforcement, the judiciary, youth and the health and education sector in addressing gender-based violence, is another core component of the UN Women's programme which emphasizes the engagement of men and boys in transformative efforts at the community level in support of shaping positive masculinities.

Working with a team of experts, UN Women MCO has developed and supported the implementation of psycho-educational tools for group-based work with young men and young women related to violence prevention and building competencies for empowerment and resilience. These efforts are aimed at the transformation of individual values, attitudes, behaviours and power dynamics between women and men which lie at the root of gender-based violence and which are also indispensable to a gender-responsive citizen security agenda in the region.

¹ Selwyn Ryan et al. 2013. "No time to quit: engaging youth at risk". Executive report of the Committee on Young Males and Crime in Trinidad and Tobago. St Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago.



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



Boys, Masculinity and Education

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Keywords: Masculinity, gender, hegemonic masculinity, male heterosexuality

Data for three levels of education (primary, secondary, tertiary) for 202 countries across the globe¹ indicate that moving from primary through secondary to the tertiary level, Gender Parity Indices (GPI) increased from 0.96 to 0.97 to 1.40 indicating that at the higher levels of education enrolment ratios favour females. This pattern is consistent with the general situation in the Caribbean resulting in the now widely accepted but largely uncritical discourse on male underachievement, fuelled as this is by what appears to be a concomitant increase in violent crimes across the region, perpetrated, in many instances, by males under the age of 25 years.

Based on analyses of secondary level entry and performance data at two different time periods, 2004² and 2007³, it is evident that the phenomenon has more to do with **under-participation** than it has to do with underachievement. The data indicate that performance of the boys who remain in the system is creditable, particularly in critical areas such as science and technology. Claims of 'male underachievement', therefore, are relative and emerge by comparing the achievement of boys with that of girls. This approach to the problem draws

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on a between-sex analytical framework and, in this paradigm, the issue is viewed as one manifestation of gendered social processes that occur both in the home and in the school.

The focus of the discourse, therefore, has been largely on explanatory frameworks which focus on cultural determinants of male under-participation which have serious limitations both in terms of explaining the phenomenon as well as informing interventions. Under this rubric, explanations are limited to home and school concerns and have included the feminization of education, the lack of relevance of the school curriculum for boys, the need to introduce pedagogical strategies that appeal to boys, the lack of male role models, the absentee father, testosterone that drives adolescent attitudes and behaviour and the impact of female headed-households on the parenting of boys. This work has its own inherent value but the phenomenon of male underachievement has to be also assessed in relation to ways in which institutionalized, macro-level, particularly political-economic structures and systems, privilege some and subordinate others.

The logical question which then follows is: **which boys are under-participating and therefore under-achieving and why?** This question can only be answered by moving away from a univariate, between-sex comparison which assumes that sex is the most important determinant of participation and performance to a more robust multivariate research framework. Such a shift in the research paradigm allows for an analysis of the intersectionality of sex with other critical factors which determine educational outcomes and to an examination of within-sex differences. Research conducted by the CGDS/IGDS⁴ drawing on this approach, showed that, at the secondary level, the sex of the student was not always a significant determinant of performance. Many other factors, which had either a direct or indirect link with socio-economic status of the student as well as ethnicity, were significant in explaining performance.

These findings are not unexpected given that historically, in the Caribbean, race and political economy have played an important role in access to formal education. From inception, different value and worth were assigned to the education of different groups: working class ex-slaves vis-à-vis the elite plantocracy; blacks vis-à-vis whites and males vis-à-vis females. One therefore needs to interrogate what seems to be an underlying assumption of the male underachievement discourse: **is education perceived by the State and by all sub-groups in a population as being equally essential for meeting their needs and aspirations?**

Any effort to identify factors that account for observed gender disparities in participation and performance in Caribbean education systems must take into account political-economic factors that frame and influence gender reproduction and male/female experiences both inside and outside of the school. Lewis (2004)⁵, a noted Caribbean scholar, cogently points to the shortcoming in this regard and posits that:

...it is precisely this systemic nature of the problem that is overlooked in many discourses of gender. Rather than contextualise the nature of the problem faced by men and women in terms of structural determinants, many reduce the problematic to the level of the individual or the collectivity, so that the issue becomes conceptualised as pathology to be corrected without reference to wider social (economic, political) considerations. (p.251)

Such an analysis reveals the diversity of class experience and leads to an interrogation of macro-level structures and processes. The question that then follows is: **What are the structural determinants that reinforce class difference and neutralize the equalizing role of education?** I would posit that the structure of opportunity in Caribbean economies which privileges males, in both the formal and informal sectors, is a major determinant. Data from a number of sources support this hypothesis. These can be summarized as follows:

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- a) The lower levels of certification of males in Caribbean labour markets but their higher levels of employment;
 - b) Males with all levels of educational attainment earning more than females with a resulting wage gap favouring males;
 - c) Economic restructuring and the emergence of post-industrial/agricultural society with a shift away from semi-skilled, manual work and the loss of male, working class jobs to service-oriented feminized jobs. Boys from lower-socio-economic groups therefore opt to withdraw from education, both physically and psychologically, because, in this economic environment, schooling has little functional or symbolic value;
 - d) Increased opportunities for males in the informal sector especially in the sports and music industries as well as opportunities for economic gain associated with illegal, globalised activities such as the trade in drugs and small arms, the Caribbean being well positioned as trans-shipment points for these products.

These observations are not unique to the Caribbean. The universality of the pattern of male under-participation in formal education, therefore, can only be explained in terms of meta-principles of social organisation that are not only structural but also ideological. This leads to another critical question: **Are entrenched gender ideologies determinants of male under-participation and under-achievement in formal education?**

A pivotal dimension of a hegemonic masculinity and male heterosexual identity is the ideology of the male breadwinner. The dominant position of males in waged work and income generation, as outlined above, reflects this entrenched ideology which is perpetuated by economies around the world that privilege males with lower levels of certification over females with higher certification for certain jobs and positions. Further, even where both sexes have equal levels of education, males are also privileged. The result is the universal phenomenon of the horizontal and vertical sex-segregation of labour markets.

Simply put, certification does not carry the same social currency for males and females.

Data show that the phenomenon of female-headed households, possibly with the woman as the sole economic provider, is increasing in the Caribbean. This suggests that gender ideologies, including that of the male breadwinner, are slowly being challenged and disrupted. What cannot be ignored, however, is the fact that despite these challenges, patriarchal systems continue to serve traditional interest and motive which combine to maintain the *status quo* and ensure that the gains of men are not significantly disrupted. Under this system education, therefore, is seen by some males as unnecessary for guaranteeing access to paid work and for maintaining economic dominance.

Further, research points to the fact that attitudes and behaviours associated with traditional, hegemonic masculinity are antithetical to academic achievement and are therefore associated with male drop-out from school and under-achievement. This lack of interest in school is further reinforced by the fact that, based on the essentialist view that boys are naturally bad and girls are naturally good, the gender regime of schools metes out harsher treatment to boys than to girls, creating yet another disincentive for boys to remain in school.

Given the dynamic interplay between structural and ideological factors which impact male participation in schooling, the following question arises: **is a paradigm shift required in the quest to fully understand the problem of male under-participation in formal education and to find workable solutions?**

As alluded to earlier, I fully endorse the recommendation coming out of the World Bank Report on Youth and Social Development in Trinidad and Tobago⁶ which points to the need for a paradigm shift in research and policy formulation. It is suggested that instead of a focus on negative outcomes related to single, univariate issues and the identification of interventions to treat these symptoms intended to avoid repetition of the event, there should be a

shift to a framework which incorporates not only factors at the individual level but also takes into account the broader social, institutional and structural context of youth development. This, the bank contends, would allow for a focus on inter-related risk antecedents operating in both these spheres and therefore to address causes rather than symptoms and to take a more integrated approach to addressing these inter-related factors.

Such a conceptual model to address the issue of male under-participation in education proposed by Bailey (2009)⁷ allows us to take both the cultural and the political-economy perspectives into account; to address micro as well as macro level factors and to better understand not only between-sex differences but also within-sex differences mediated as these are by a range of personal and structural factors that impinge on participation and performance of both sexes in formal schooling.

¹ See <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/mdg/Metadata.aspx?IndicatorId=9>

² Bailey, Barbara & M. Bernard. 2004. Establishing a database of gender differentials in enrolment and performance at the secondary and tertiary levels of Caribbean education systems. Funded by the Canada-Caribbean Gender Equality Programme (Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean).

³ The University of the West Indies. The Centre for Gender and Development Studies, Regional Coordinating Unit. *Gender differentials at the secondary and tertiary levels of the education system in the anglophone Caribbean: Student performance report*. March 2007.

⁴ The University of the West Indies. The Centre for Gender and Development Studies, Regional Coordinating Unit. *Gender differentials at the secondary and tertiary levels of the education system in the anglophone Caribbean: Student performance report*. March 2007.

⁵ Lewis, Linden. 2004. Caribbean masculinity at the fin de siècle. In *Interrogating Caribbean Masculinities, Theoretical and Empirical Analyses*. Edited by R. Reddock, Kingston, Jamaica: UWI Press.

⁶ *Trinidad and Tobago youth and social development: An Integrated approach for social Inclusion*. Document of the World Bank. Report No. 20088 - TR

⁷ Bailey, Barbara. 2009. *Needed! A paradigm shift in addressing boys' underachievement in education*. Paper presented at a Regional Conference on Keeping Boys out of Risk. Montego Bay, Jamaica. May, 2009. The World Bank and the Commonwealth Secretariat.



Caribbean Male Dancers: Redefining Masculinity

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Abstract

Caribbean males in general have abandoned communal dance practices inherited from their ancestors. The re-emergence of dance and movement through exogenous music genres associated with masculinized male stereotypes has replaced autochthonous Caribbean dance forms. There is a contrast between the role of Caribbean males who perform street dance styles and that of those who perform stylized dance genres such as Ballet, Modern Dance and Post Modern. This essay discusses the use of femininity as a tool for male dancers to enhance their expressivity despite prejudicial implications in terms of their sexual orientation, their masculinity and their social status. It aims at developing awareness among males who deny themselves of their ancestral dance traditions in order to comply with a westernized post-colonial model of masculinity or a marginalized and distorted idea of male identity. It illustrates the use of femininity as part of a range of expressivity achieved by Caribbean male dancers in order to invite males to embrace femininity and masculinity, in order to recover a new sense of self expression. This work contributes to see femininity in dance as a form of masculinity that enhances the understanding males could have of their own bodies and of themselves.

Key words: mythopoetic, masculinist, expressive capacity, restoration, psychological androgyny

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Introduction

According to theatre director Tomás González Pérez, hunters from early human groups used to dance the hunt. The dance and the hunt were one and the same. The dance provided the hunter with the power to embody the forces of nature necessary for them to control and overpower them. The dance, in trance, provided them with the strength needed to overcome bigger, ferocious and stronger animals. The display of physical strength during these dances perhaps gave birth to traditional ideals of masculinity in which the males' display of musculature, aggressiveness, bravery and stamina became the norm. Yet we also know that the shaman or medicine man of the tribe would display androgynous traits by which masculinity and femininity combined through the exercise of shamanic dances and trance during the exercise of sacred rituals. They would use the mixture of these traits as a sign of divinity without having to make a distinction between that which was perceived as masculine and that which was perceived as feminine

Based on the degree to which Caribbean dance is absent from the male world at a community level, one could say that Caribbean males have lost ground to dance traditions intrinsically attached to the idea of power, virility and masculinity. Their almost extinct dance practices, except for Carnival, have left a void in Caribbean societies that makes it almost impossible to map the concept of dance in terms of its Caribbean genealogy. This void is often filled with self-destructive social manifestations, such as gang related crimes, drugs and alcohol addiction and violence, if not an apathy or disinterest for autochthonous forms of dance-expression. At the risk of being unavoidably reductive, I must address popular and/or community oriented dance practices such as the *Areíto* danced by the native *Tainos* of the Antilles, the European Folk Dances introduced by first settlers, the *orisha* dances that enslaved African people brought to the islands, the Asian dances introduced to our region by those brought to our shores under the label of indentured servants and the creolized dance practices of the emerging Caribbean populations, as spaces

where men used to relate to each other in very unique, essential and meaningful ways. The agency of this statement, however, does not solve the absence of a precise typology or set of definitions that could help us to pin down the reasons why Caribbean men do not dance to the degree their ancestors did.

Dance is, in itself, an “operative concept” whose meanings are inextricably bound up with the type of problems we are about to discuss,” namely, issues related to dance and masculinity (Bala 2012). It is also attached to a need for developing a sense of selfhood, community restoration and revival of performance practices among men through dance. Thus dance, as a concept, is not addressed here as merely descriptive, but as “programmatically” in the sense that the choice and justification for using the term leads and implies specific effects, such as the undoing of prejudice against male dancers and their self-defining masculinity. Even if built upon “layers of semantic shades,” dance expression could be a decisive element in rebuilding masculinity to its original place of relevance in male social structures by contesting the predominant perception that dance is feminine (Bala 2012). These semantic shades permeate Ballet, Modern, Post-Modern, folk and street dances as they also encapsulate the histories and contexts of the concept of masculinity in relation to dance.

Enhancing Expressivity

In the stylized dance world, the female body in its expressiveness, not just in its anatomic features, becomes an example for the human species. Thus, for male dancers, the female body encompasses versatility, diversity of movement and a greater range of possibilities for expression. Males who do not dance are generally constrained by a set of social norms to which neither the female nor male dancer’s bodies are subjected to. This is perhaps what motivated professor Herb Goldberg to state that “the male in our culture is at a growth

impasse" (Goldberg 1987). As he acknowledges, men "won't move — not because he is protecting his cherished central place in the sun, but because he can't move." "He," says Goldberg, "lacks the fluidity of the female who can readily move between the traditional definitions of male and female behaviors and roles" (4). One cannot help but agree with Goldberg except that when it comes to male dancers, because of their field of expertise, they have learned to navigate these traditional definitions with the same fluidity women do. The opposite seems to be true for other males whose overly masculinized restrained movements probably do not allow them to embrace this fluidity at a body/mind level.

The female body is naturally more expressive because of its capacity to bare children; it is anatomically more flexible and malleable, crowned with a brain equally responsive to change. Masculinity, in its most traditional form, demands for the body to contract, to toughen up, to be inexpressive. The most extremely prejudiced sectors of society may tell us that men do not cry, men do not dance, men do not move their hips, men do not smile. *Dead Boys Don't Dance*, a book dedicated to the effects of lack of "integration" and "stigmatization" among children and young adults, illustrates the prejudices suffered by male individuals, who from an early age appear to others as effeminate and consequently homosexual (Dorais and Lajeunesse 2004). If one adheres to one of the few concepts of masculinity, "a man's need to feel powerful, dominant, respected, and to hold power over others," then one may infer that men should be a compact mass that moves heavy on the floor, looking forward, with a tight jaw and a fist ready to punch the adversary (Essuon 2007). Is it not this image presented to us as the norm for masculine behavior in popular culture, movies and TV shows? Yet, as explained by Therese A. Rando, from The Institute for the Study and Treatment of Loss, these are "traditionally held, yet empirically unsupported notions that have caused varying levels of harm to a significant proportion of bereaved individuals" (Doka and Martin 2014).

Because “male-female stereotypic movements learned early in life operate as implicit beliefs and expectations,” male dancers’ expressivity develops in opposition to generalized movement patterns descriptive of male domination in society (Hanna 1988). This hegemonic way of presenting the body to the world is more in tune with the new inner-city Hip Hop dances than, for instance, the courtly-born ballet techniques inherited in the Caribbean from its European colonial insertions. Academically developed by the *Sun King* (Louis XIV) in the XVII century; ballet is still taught in a set of codified or pre-designed, still labeled in French, steps which mannerisms are still perceived as feminine. However, the value of these steps lay on the many years of knowledge about the movement of the human body, female and male, that this Western dance form has compiled throughout history. This knowledge, its discipline and rigor adapted to the Caribbean context, can positively influence the way dance is viewed by males and the way dance education can reshape the body and the mind of future Caribbean dancers. Although Judith Lynne Hanna in her book *Dance, Sex, and Gender: Signs of Identity, Dominance, Defiance and Desire*, states that “contemporary ballet choreographers and directors are always male,” she also agrees that male choreographers and managers treat dancers like children, school them in obedience and deference, call women ‘girls’ and call men ‘boys’ (Hanna 1988). This is indeed another way in which male dancers’ masculinity is diminished even within the field of dance. Already in the 1940s, New York Times dance critic John Martin stated that dancers, specifically male, should be exempt from military service. “Dancers”, he wrote, “were ‘pretty unstable type[s]’ liable to go berserk under strain” (Leeds Craig 2013).

Empowering Male Dance

Yet the technical aspect of any stylized dance form speaks to the discipline, competitiveness and assertiveness usually identified with type-A male personality. These characteristics are not necessarily associated with the weakness of character male dancers may be thought of having by those who

do not know how physically demanding professional dance can be. If Caribbean men in general gave themselves the opportunity to acquire dance knowledge, males who embrace traditional stereotypical roles would be able to realize that stylized dances can be a frame within which they can explore different degrees of expressive physical masculinity. These masculinities are not at all in conflict with other environments less prone to accept the expressivity of the male body as normal. Furthermore, males with stereotypical masculine behaviors may encounter in stylized dance forms a space where masculinity is expressed within a larger spectrum of behaviors that range from the most traditionally perceived as effeminate to the most stereotypically masculine. When one refers to male dance and movement, it should all be understood as part of masculine expression because it is expressed through a male's body.

Implications for the Masculine

The monopoly of media images presents men as a stock character, a projection of what "real men" should look and behave like: strong, independent, studly, athletic. While the portrayal of men by mainstream international film industries, for instance, is also violent, "ethnic" men, other than Caucasian, have fewer opportunities to see themselves in positive roles. Their use of *Hip Hop* and *Reggaeton* dance as a means to cope with their social environment proves dance and music, viable vehicles for Caribbean men to have a space in which to validate their masculinity independently from the mainstream media. *Hip Hop*, for instance, is a self-generated men's movement primarily, although inclusive of females as well, where the masculinities of the group are forged in the dance and the poetry. Yet when it comes to stylized dance forms, the masculinities generated around the work remain taboo for young men who emulate masculinities centered on strict patterns of what is considered masculine behavior. These patterns are more in tune with forces exogenous to the self, such as homophobia and prejudice, than a mature and

self-reflective understanding of what masculinity means at a personal and community level, much less what it means in dance.

The fact that in the field of dance men dancers are noticeably outnumbered by women dancers may perpetuate the assumption that dance is not a man's career. When judged under the rubric of hegemonic power, dance is disempowering for men. This however goes as far back as the XIX century when middle class men simply "did not look right on the ballet stage" (Burt 2003). As viewed back then, "a pillar of the community, an elector, a municipal counselor, a man whose business is to make and, above all, unmake laws, the male dancer dressed in sky blue, satin and wearing a feathered hat," had little to do with the ideal of a middle class public male that still prevails in most societies (Burt 2003). The fact that professional dance companies depend on subsidies, grants and donations condemns men to a type of economic dependence that negates traditionally masculine ideals of economic success and social responsibility. This should not be a deterrent for males who want to dance, for it should be the empowering effects of creolized dance styles, the mix of stylized and regional dances, and not just the money or social status, that should contribute to develop a true sense of Caribbean masculinity and success. This power surfaces already through street dances. It is a matter of reframing them through the embodiment of the knowledge passed on through the dances still performed in small communities throughout the region. In this way Caribbean men could find a true sense of masculinity by which femininity rather than being detrimental to men's sense of manhood, becomes instrumental to the growth of a new and more complex man.

Dance in Education

As a resident of the Caribbean, one could speculate that the great majority of Caribbean people start dancing at a very early age, at least through the many carnivals and festivals celebrated in the region. Although this might be

an element of our culture that is taken for granted, it can be used educationally to improve knowledge acquisition, social interaction, body/mind integration and social fluency. Another tool could be the restoration of our first peoples' dances "as a way to evolve a pedagogical model that simultaneously focuses on the Caribbean subject, his/her body, and the process of embodying knowledge through movement" (Morejón 2012). Professor Mia Leijssen wrote about how "the richness of the bodily source can be used in a more conscious way by paying attention to different aspects of the body" (Leijssen 2006). As she explains, "the body, as sensed from inside, or the experiencing of the body, is one source of information," that develops a higher degree of "awareness, engagement in the present, deepening of experience, opening the body memory, cathartic release, resolving blocks and exploring new possibilities" (Leijssen 2006). Assuming that Leijssen's words are true, to the degree that dance becomes more accessible to Caribbean men is the degree to which they will be able to recuperate a mature sense of masculinity, a legacy that although denied to the culture by centuries of disembodiment degrees of expressivity, still should have a relevant influence when reclaiming a male total sense of self.

The Language of Dance

To whatever degree one may consider masculinity to be present in a male's dance performance, the language of dance itself seems to erase the prejudice that a stereotypically masculine individual may hold against the art form. In dance, a new sense of masculinity emerges when one engages in the profound exercise of embodying and expressing feelings, images, and metaphors. This could be highly technical at one level and deeply introspective at another. On one hand, technical dance abilities need to be developed, and on the other, dance is a vehicle for the expression of realized experience, which includes the relationships with the female world, a relationship that starts with one's mother at birth.

Dance also makes possible a neutral masculinity, an androgynous expression of the masculine that emerges within dance training and performance. This is similar to what Mary Ann Warren has defined as psychological androgyny, “the combination in a single person, of either sex, of so called masculine and feminine character traits” (Warren 1982). This makes male dancers less threatening to women, less caricaturesque, less of a stock character or macho-like impersonator and more human. Thus, Dance contributes to shape a type of man that is more open to a special kind of individuality not confined to either feminine or masculine modes of behavior in order to be both rational and intuitive, what a “complete and competent human being ought to be” (Warren 1982). Dance generates masculinity, challenges arbitrarily defined secondary male characteristics, loose definitions of gender and unjustified distinction and separation of human beings by their sex. In other words, this masculinity exercised by modern male dancers is in conflict with hegemonic notions of what is considered masculine by precisely embracing the feminine as an alternative to traditional masculine traits and expressions. Diederik F. Janssen in his essay “Male Initiation: Imagining Ritual Necessity” acknowledges Kathleen Engebretson’s recent study in which she concludes that a key component of Melbourne 15 to 18-year-old boys’ spirituality is “a growing tendency to challenge the hegemonic ideal of masculinity, and to look towards a future where masculinity is defined in more varied and fulfilling ways” (Janssen 2006, under “Male Initiation”). There is no reason why this challenge cannot be also embraced by Caribbean male youth.

Occupying a Different Space

Maxine Leeds Craig in *Sorry I Don't Dance: Why Men Refuse to Move* explains how American dancer Gene Kelly described dance as “the practice of contained virility, which viewers were encouraged to see as a particular masculine form of embodiment” (Leeds Craig 2014). As explained by Leeds Craig, Kelly suggested that there is a sharp line between masculine and

feminine dance, making the assertion that a male dancer will always be stronger" (Leeds Craig 2014). However, this view from the 1940's in North America is no longer shared by most dancers. Opposite to being violent and at times physically overdeveloped, the kind of body spectacle claimed by male structural bodies such as those of bodybuilders and Hollywood heroes, contemporary male dancers seem to want to occupy a different space. When their personalities are fully developed, they seem to exist, at least metaphorically and despite being "belittled by homophobic society for being the wrong kind of men", in a space of beauty, expression, peace and by extension a sense of spirituality born out the embodiment of male and female expressive qualities (Leeds Craig, 2014).

Reclaiming Dance: Trinidad and Tobago

Ballet knowledge has been accumulated by generations of dancers who embraced ballet technique as a way to achieve physical ideals of excellence when communicating a fantastic story to an audience. Although the purpose varies, this knowledge is not different from popular martial arts such as Kung Fu, Tai-Chi or even Capoeira, in the sense that these are also codified means of movement, energy and feeling production. However, these martial arts forms, except for Capoeira, to a certain extent are as foreign to the Caribbean idiosyncrasies as Ballet, Modern Dance and Post-Modern dance techniques are to Caribbean traditional notions of masculinity. The Caribbean culture, more prone to "liming" than it is to fighting, to *pasar el rato* (kill time), than it is to engage in codified strenuous exercises, disengages with both martial arts and aesthetically oriented dance. Nevertheless, the bellicose nature of the forms mentioned above corresponds to traditional masculinity codes that to this day permeate every layer of our Caribbean societies. Influenced perhaps by a "master" narrative reflecting the "masculinist features" of the "imperial and state ideologies," as well as gendered nationalism, Caribbean males are still represented within the "trappings and costumes" of a civilization that worships a

certain kind of rigid masculinity (Stephens 2005). Thus, although culturally and socially distant, these martial forms are welcomed throughout different economic and socio-political strata because they enhance the masculine ideals attributed to male bodies. This is why the noticeable pattern of “girls go to ballet and boys go to karate or baseball,” seem to perpetuate a competitive mentality even among those parents who can afford a diversified body training for their children.

Male dancers defy these codes of masculinity the minute they set foot on a dance studio. Becoming a dancer is usually translated by masculinists as being less than men, a homosexual, a sissy, which means, beyond the sexual preferences implied, stereotypically effeminate. It is true that the French court of *Louis XIV* of France, himself the winner of three wars, but also an advocate of the arts, valued femininity as a sign of nobility. The French nobles’ level of affectation can be considered by our current standards even caricaturesque. Professor of Dance History Ramsey Burt describes how “Igor Guest quotes at length from a tirade against the male dancer written by Jules Janin in 1840,” who described ballet as a “feminine spectacle” (Burt 2003). It is also true that these balletic feminine mannerisms have, along with the difficult and physically demanding steps, permeated the current classical and contemporary ballet techniques. But this in no way detracts from a male dancer’s overall masculinity as perceived by feminist and progressive men and women. On the contrary, to achieve the greatest degrees of expressivity, male dancers embrace what is considered by most as feminine, as a revolutionary form of masculinity that defies old patterns of masculine behaviors, social prejudices, and the stigma imposed on them by homophobic and extremist views. Carlos Acosta, principal dancer of the Royal Ballet of England, executes his ballet movements with flawless body expression, in character, with a kind of male gracefulness suited for all men to witness, that should be admired and emulated, particularly by Caribbean men, since Acosta was born in Cuba.

Educating children during their early years of life in the art of community building, body expression, kinesthetic empathy, artistic creativity and inner and outer environmental conditioning through the arts is a viable solution that fits into the cultural makeup of the Caribbean. Even though dance continues to be a cultural privilege that in our countries is thought of as almost exclusively female, there is hope. In Trinidad and Tobago, for instance, dance has become a regular subject of study in primary schools. This is very important because it sets a precedent for the needed shift in the Caribbean educational paradigm. By including dance in its schools' curriculum, Trinidad and Tobago is not just investing in the training of future generations of men in "the art of dance," the educational theory implemented in most dance education programs, but it is also contributing to the country's social healing process (Smith-Autard 2002).

Stylized Dance Forms

In traditional terms, women dancers do not embody masculinity to become more expressive, unless playing a male character. Great extensions and a good turnout are part of a feminine trait built into a ballet technique which comes easy to women as they start their dance training early in life, but also as a result of having a body that, in its ability to bare children, has also looser joints. Men need to work on their bodies arduously and often later in their practice mostly because they start dancing late. The majority of male ballet dancers start dancing when they have the authority to make their own decisions about what to do with their own bodies. That usually happens around the age of eighteen, if not later. Stylized dance is the last thing most parents, who think of masculinity in conservative terms, seem to want for their male children to do. The idea of a male body expressing its female traits, as it is perceived in most stylized dance forms, does not seem to be a desirable goal in a society that is still "phallocentric" (Markwick 2013). In addition, men dancing ballet, modern or postmodern dance, specifically Caribbean men, have been traditionally subjected to a form of otherness, not only because of the dance,

but because of the generalized perception of the male dancer as being weak in character. The type of forced migration that has taken place in the Caribbean islands prior to the end of colonialism, whether in the form of slavery or indentured servitude, has taken a toll on notions of masculinity that have little to do with the need to grow crops or raise a family and more to do with prejudice. Thus one could say that the subsequent lack of support for the arts is, among other factors, the residue of decades of pre-feminist Victorian patriarchal rhetoric in which men, attuned to strict rules of conduct, failed to “embrace their nurturing selves” (Markwick 2013). Thus it seems as if we, as a society, have inherited a type of masculinity that has become “a problem area of social functioning.” However, “evidence of men expressing their masculinity through their nurturing side through the 1990s suggests that dance, in its ability to enhance male experiences, can be a complement in developing a more “gender-neutral” concept of what it is like to be man in the XXI century.

This is perhaps why stylized dance forms attract men who are acquainted with the stigma of Caribbean otherness, a stigma that excludes them from the inherited colonial discourse of the civilized male imported from the early European metropolis. However, despite the taboos revolving around the idea of male dance, all Caribbean men should feel they have the opportunity to recover self-expression through dance practices. There should be no hesitation. Stylized forms of dance seem to attract some of the toughest human beings on earth, male and female, who not only endure long hours of training, rehearsing, touring and performing, but what seems to be society's lack of financial retribution and inability to see male dancers anywhere, but at the very bottom of the cultural, if not social, hierarchy. If all men embrace dance as a consequence of being male, the prejudice could stop.

Essentialized Male Dances

Ted Shawn (1891–1972), an American choreographer known for leading an all-male company of dancers, tried to get rid of American prejudice against men dancers by developing a dance technique built upon essentialized masculine actions. He used a mixture of themes in his dances: Native American, early American pioneer, Spanish, African-American, American folk and contemporary seaman, laborer, politician and artist, in order to get away from traditional ballet music and dance technique. In 1933, Shawn created his men's group *Ted Shawn and His Men Dancers*. Subsequently, he began a seven-year tour, performing nationally and internationally, with the purpose of establishing in the minds of his audiences not only the right of men to dance, but to dance in the same post-colonial heroic masculine ideals championed by the American imaginary of his time. Shawn tried to rescue a sense of patriarchal ideals that had very little to do with an individualized sense of male masculinity and more with traditional views of what men ought to be, move or look like, even in dance, in order to be accepted.

The tough and contracted bodies of his dancers, trained in farm labor that they later incorporated into their dance steps, created a generalized version of masculinity in dance that left no room for the sensitive masculinity underlined in this essay. Although other American dance trends made it to the Caribbean, Shawn's fixation with the masculine in dance in accordance to a colonial ideological construct, did not make it to the islands in the same way. Not many Caribbean choreographers have created an all male dance company invested in embodying such traditional masculine ideals. In the Caribbean, some choreographers, such as Alberto Alonso, Ramiro Guerra and Eduardo Rivero, for instance, creators of *El Solar*, *Suite Yoruba* and *Sulkary* respectively, did impregnate their choreographic work with stereotypically masculine portrayals of Cuban men, but not in isolation. Their choreographies for male dancers served as complement to the female dancers, by accentuating a

type of masculinity that mimicked the ideals of the populous, the government and the art censors.

They were also exponents of the same postcolonial ideology Shawn had given into, but unlike Shawn, their ideology was probably also dictated by the direct mandates of the post-1959 Cuban government. Sabine Sörgel, in her book *Dancing Postcolonialism: The National Dance Theatre Company of Jamaica*, in reference to *Sulkari*, expresses how “Rivero’s aestheticized display of male prowess enhances an image of macho-hypersensuality which is in pictorial accordance with a prevalent racial stereotype” (Sörgel 2007). Sörgel also states that “Rivero’s heroic gender portrayal creates an image of the Caribbean black male dancer which evokes a modernist Darwinian type of the masculine.” She quotes Ramsay Burt who critiqued “this same essentialized masculinity also in the work of Martha Graham, Jose Limon and Alvin Ailey.” Sörgel agrees with Burt in that “non-white masculinities appear from a dominant, white point of view, to be in touch with essential, natural masculinity” (Sörgel 2007).

Post-Colonial Masculinity

Cuba’s prominent role in the region’s dance movement is only part of the colonial legacy all Caribbean nations have shared. In the rest of the Caribbean world, the construction of postcolonial masculinity among male dancers, even when they are successful artistically and financially, remains provisional, temporary and contested. In general, the diverse ethnic background of Caribbean males conditions a prefabricated sense of masculinity that makes it difficult to consider dance as a way out of economic misfortune. As it was for Shawn’s America, dance in the Caribbean has never been serious and masculine enough because the English, Spanish, French or Dutch colonial male decided to emulate early European ideals of traditional masculinity, to reaffirm his masculine condition. Hence, to embrace dance as a way of being in the world, immediately contradicts a Caribbean sense of masculinity built “in

oppositional and relational ways to femininity" (Lewis 2003). This is why it becomes almost impossible to get men to join the dance companies that remain active along the Caribbean basin. Thus the colonial agenda, based on emasculating Caribbean males by denying them, among other things, opportunities to dance, has proven successful. Long after the independence from European powers, Caribbean males remain trapped in notions of masculinity which, by denying not only Ballet and Modern Dance, but also historic dance practices, disempowered them. It is precisely by not dancing that Caribbean men are separated from their *ache*, a Yoruba word that, according to Professor Neri Torres, during one of her Afro-Cuban Dance classes at Florida International University, 1997, can be described as "the power to make things happen."

Barbadian author George Lamming in an interview published by Banyan Radio on the web, admits to his realization of the imperialist influence on the Caribbean region and its separated identities, "Jamaica from Barbados, Barbados from Trinidad, and so on," precisely in London, (pancaribbean.com). It is in London where, ironically, Lamming experienced what it was like to be a Caribbean person due to, among other influences, the impact of the Jamaica Dance Company. As he acknowledges, in reference to dance, "quite often people do not know what they have. It's only when they try to examine themselves in a particular situation that they discover that they have this resource" (*The Caribbean Voice*). It seems tragic that ignorance about Caribbean Dance as a resource has led the region to institutionalize the neglect of the art form. Male politicians, who lack exposure to dance, and therefore appreciation for dance as an expression of art and masculinity, ignore the importance dance has in the development of a healthy modern Caribbean identity for male citizens. Yet all the way from the rituals of the *Abakua* in Cuba to the Trinidadian *Orisha* ceremonies, dance has played an important role in the shaping of Caribbean masculinity in an all-encompassing way for certain surviving communities of religious practitioners. Masculinity in dance was for our Caribbean ancestors much more inclusive and flexible in terms of not only the

way gender roles and behaviours were expressed, but also sacredness and spirituality, a scarce trait in the dances one sees on stage nowadays.

The dances for the orishas in the Afro-Cuban pantheon, for instance, are supposed to be danced by both males and females. Deities do not have a specific gender, even when they are represented with male or female characteristics. However, as described by Afro-Cuban dance instructor Marisol Blanco in one of her classes at Dance and Fitness, DAF, in Miami, Florida, 2013, while women show no inhibitions when dancing male orishas such as *Chango*, *Oggun*, *Eleggua* or *Babalú Aye*, male dancers are almost never relaxed enough to dance female orishas such as *Oshun*, *Yemaya* or *Oya*. Most male dancers are prejudiced about how feminine they may be perceived when dancing the dances of female orishas. Dancing a female character inhibits the ability the male dancer has to unfold and develop his full potential as an interpreter of the female energies of the Cuban-Yoruba pantheon.

Redefining Caribbean Masculinity

A new model has developed in Santa Clara, Cuba, with *Danza del Alma* (Dance from the Soul) an all male company directed by choreographer Ernesto Alejo. This company is making a big statement in terms of the role of men in dance. They are a group of male dancers who, in the voice of veteran Cuban choreographer Ramiro Guerra, “have a strength, a vitality, a coherence” that is not in conflict with female or male roles (bing.videos). They play both gender roles depending on the narrative of the piece. It is because of this dual masculinity that Cuban dance company, *Danza del Alma*, as expressed by Guerra, “signifies a great and strong image on the stage of Caribbean dance.” More importantly, the name of the company also describes a dance that emerges not only from the superb technical abilities of the male dancers, but from their connection with their vital, spiritual and sacred energy, an energy that has no gender, the soul.

González Pérez brought attention to the fact that the performing arts have lost connection with the sacred, what he calls the *numen*, implicit in theatre and by extension in dance. In his article “La Posesión: privilegio de la teatralidad” (Possession: Privilege of Theatricality), he explains how “the orishas are concentrations of energy without a material body”, adding that “the concentrated energy of the orisha is the result of an extremely passionate history kept throughout time” (González Pérez 2003). Looked at from this point of view, the performance of “archetypes” through orisha dances are a form of “concentrated energy” in function of an “exalted and embodied poetic personal story” that in addition to dance techniques and popular contemporary trends would return Caribbean males to a true sense of power (González Pérez 2003). González Pérez’s reference to the ritual dances and practices of Africans in Cuba, as a direct source of knowledge readily available to connect back with ancestral sacred energy is inclusive of both male and female energies as manifested through dance in its all encompassing sense, e.g. ballet, modern dance, traditional dance.

Although González Pérez does not specify gender or sex, Caribbean men’s reluctance to embody the whole range of Caribbean dance forms as a way of living in the world negates their own masculinity. Exploring a kind of masculinity that is Caribbean and sacred, in contraposition to post-colonial ideals of what a male subject should be like, gets male dancers closer to the embodiment of femininity as an another layer of human expressivity they should count on to interpret more complex and demanding roles. However the response to male dancers often originates from angles that judge rather than support male dance. Ramsey Burt explains:

“One may feel distaste at macho displays of male energy, on the dance stage — what are they trying to prove, etc.? One might feel that male dancers are generally a disappointment; they just don’t look very masculine. Or one might feel that the way one has seen masculinity represented in dance do not

seem very relevant to one's own experience of class, race, gender, sexuality, etc. Then, there are those who do enjoy watching male dance and wish there were more male dancers around to watch" (Burt 2003).

It is this type of reaction what has turned dance into an almost female-only artistic expression. As expressed by Burt, "the ways in which the male dancer's presence succeeds or fails in reinforcing male power is clearly central to an understanding of representations of male characteristics in theatre dance" (Burt 2003). Choreographers Johanna Boyce and Bill T. Jones both create dance that deals with themes related to gender and sexuality. They both are aware of "the convention that in order to represent masculinity, a dancer should look powerful." Boyce thinks that "being on display is equal to loss of power," while Jones "connects the performer's gaze with objectification (being a commodity) and implies that being extremely aggressive is a way of re-imposing control and thus evading objectification". However, what does this way of examining male dance do for male dancers if, what is commodified by being looked at on display, is his own sexuality? This sexuality, more than just that of a "black male, as the Other," as may be the case in North America, is the sexuality of a Caribbean male, a mixed race male, still subjected to "the white male norm;" a norm perpetuated by Caribbean men also as a result of a colonial mentality that still persists.

Thus, what transpires is that representation of gender in dance depends on "who looks at whom" and "how surveillance relates to power in Western Society," the Caribbean included (Burt 2003). What seems to be problematic, according to Burt, is not that men should not be looked at, but how they are supposed to appear when they are the object of a spectator's gaze. Yes, predictably, they are supposed to look aggressively masculine. However, this expectation frames a type of gender representation that does not contribute to the true expressive role of male dancers as communicators. On the contrary, by imposing this type of structure on male dance, male dancers will continue to

bear "the norms of heterosexual masculinity which dictate that men should appear strong and should challenge the audience's gaze" (Burt 2003). If this is not the case, male dancers are left with the stigma that still prevails and that keeps males away from dance performance. Males who embrace femininity as part of their expressive resources fight against "a macho overcompensation of trying to prove that ballet is tough really and that modern dance is not soft like ballet" (Burt 2003).

When Caribbean males are the subject of this type of mentality, one can assume they also become victims of a type of mentality which not only affects ballet and modern dancers but dancers of other dance forms as well. By separating men from dance, any dance, the colonizer won the acculturation battle Caribbean males had to go through. The disembodiment of indigenous and Afro traditions suffered by Caribbean men as a result of religious and ideological impositions, except for Carnival, along with the prejudice against stylized dance forms has created a void in what could have been a unique process of re-embodying masculinity. Despite Burt's comment on the different possible scenarios that male dancers are subjected to, opposite to the hegemonic views that have permeated Caribbean men's concept of masculinity, by not dancing, men in our region have been erased from dance as a popular cultural manifestation, as a community builder and as an expression of their vital energy and power. Metaphorically speaking, by not dancing, Caribbean men became half men. Rather than more masculine, by not dancing they became emasculated.

Recommendations

Two alternative ways could lead cultural policies to the redefinition of dance for males. Within that, a new sense of Caribbean masculinity, more inclusive and less dogmatic, less servile to foreign conceptions and less detrimental to local and regional communities, needs to emerge. One alternative could be the restoration of Caribbean ancient dance practices that

include the whole community, males and females alike, and move from there into more stylized explorations of individual experiences. This in turn would allow more contemporary and abstract self-expression, one that would benefit from a deeper understanding of the connection between the psyche and the body. This connection is what Dance Movement Therapist Susan Kleinman has identified as rhythmic synchrony, kinesthetic awareness, and kinesthetic empathy, namely the attuning, the sensing, the fostering and the sharing implicit in the integration of dance and movement experience with a focus on the personal understanding of “one's inner experience” (Kleinman 2013).

In the expressive mode of Ballet, Modern and Post Modern dance, masculinity could find a place to exist, independently from preconceived notions of what it ought to be. The rooting of such masculinity would be, similar to the Earth People movement in Trinidad, just to give an example, the “wider sense of a natural, earth oriented” and fundamentally Caribbean way of life inclusive of Indigenous, African, Asian and European cultures alike. The other alternative is to embrace contemporary street dance movements such as *Hip Hop*, *Reggaeton* and *Cubaton*, as forms of dance production that could also lead to self-expression in general, at the same time that allow males to express the feminine aspects of the art in equal terms with the masculine. A balance between feminist masculinity, the masculinity that embraces female conceptions of the masculine, and mythopoetic feminism, the spiritual branch of the men's movement that “uses myths and poetry as vehicles for accessing inner emotions, inner realities, and feelings,” would benefit the overall production of meaningful and representative Caribbean dance. This already happens at many levels; however it is the acknowledgement of these spaces as a valid source of manhood, male bonding and manly expression, where the resurgence of femininity as an embodied form of masculinity in dance, could find truly representative creative sources.

Conclusion

Dance was a space where men were not exposed to the stigma that professional and non-professional male dancers have to struggle with today. Because of this stigmatization, men have given up ground in terms of dance spaces in which they can assert their masculinities and connection with the essential aspects of their ancestral dances. Masculinity, as a concept, would benefit from the acknowledgment of the expression of the feminine as a tool to regain power in contemporary post-modern spaces. A male dancer cannot be truly and totally expressive to his fullest potential unless he opens himself to feminine expressivity. Femininity in dance looked at as another expression of masculinity, could also serve as foundation to develop a new communicational tool different from the hegemonic constructs at play, namely discourse as opposed to performativity. Because the “non-verbal areas of experience are associated with the somatic stages of dependence on the mother,” dance could be considered “marginal to dominant discourse, but also a potential site of subversion of it” (Burt 2003, 52). Due to its performatic qualities, dance could be considered the Caribbean’s true and most embraced cultural legacy, a legacy that needs to be also embraced by all men and not just male dancers.

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Counter Narratives – Daddies at the Mall

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Abstract

The participation of Caribbean males in family life has been hotly debated: Researchers who hold the nuclear family to be normative describe male participation as being weak to non-existent, while other scholars who assert that there are varied and valid family formations, not just the nuclear family, have found Caribbean men to be participating in a wider range of familial roles than just “father”. This photo essay relies on the assertions of a convenience sample of 19 men, with their families, at a shopping mall in East Trinidad. Every father, without fail, said that a “real man” must take up his responsibility. Though the brevity of the interviews and the setting did not allow them to elaborate on their conception of responsibility, they all intimated the fulfillment of multiple roles of provider, protector, nurturer, and helpmate to their partner or spouse. The essay thus challenges the mainstream conception that Caribbean males are irresponsible family members and calls for readers to consider how their family participation may be changing with changing times.

Keywords: masculinity; responsibility; fathering; nurturing; photo essay

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Introduction

Barrow (1999) has well documented the history of research on the Caribbean family. Much of the early research focused on the Afro-Caribbean family. It characterized the families, particularly the fathers, from a point of “deficit”. Men were described as being “absent”, “irresponsible”, “itinerant”, “unfaithful”. This negative conception of our men pervades our everyday discourse. Some men undoubtedly fit the descriptors but not all.

We join Barrow (1998) and Hodge (2002) in contesting these narrow and biased analyses of the Caribbean Family. We write in a revisionist tradition, presenting you with the images and narratives of ordinary men who were going about their business. There is no artifice in this simple photo essay. We seek to call your attention to their variety and to their experiences of family life.

We ask you to:

-  consider the now
-  consider the varying and various family forms
-  contemplate the variety in men
-  assess the changing attitudes to family life.

Our Pledge

If the political is about negotiating power, then our paper is deliberately political in its language and content.

-  We aim to report simply about the men that we interviewed at the mall, with the hope that this photo essay is accessible to an audience beyond the academy
-  We present images of men in the role of male nurturer. We feel this will be of great interest as male participation in nurturing personally affects all people everywhere
-  We seek to reduce our role as interpreters of the images and narratives presented here. Using a series of open-ended prompts presented at the end, we encourage you to draw your conclusions.

Defining Nurturer

We use “nurturer” to mean more than these alternatives:

-  Father – which may signal a mere biological connection. Father is also closely associated with “providing”, “protecting” and “disciplining (giving licks¹)”
-  Father-figure – which often means a role-model of sorts, who is sometimes distant with itinerant contact
-  Caregiver – suggests compulsory involvement, without significant emotional attachment, like care-giving in a medical situation.

Approach – The Men

Nineteen men at a mall in Eastern Trinidad agreed to be photographed and to share their experiences of nurturing.

Most of the men were out alone with children in the afternoon on Saturday 10th September 2011. A few were accompanied by female relatives, sometimes the children's mothers.

They were selected on the basis of their accompanying a child or children. In other words, their proximity (standing closely, holding hands, carrying, hugging, etc.) indicated a possible nurturing connection to the child or children.

Approach – the Narratives

The men are the real authors in this study. Their voices and not ours are the ones that matter.

Their lived experiences as nurturers are legitimate and valid. Their explanations and narratives construct what real men do.

Approach – the Space

We chose “the mall” because:

-  it is a reaffirming social space; it creates and strengthens meaningful significant relationships and allows mall patrons to cultivate a sense of self and group identity (Lewis 1990, 133)

 it is public

 it mixes the everyday, for those who run errands there; and the extraordinary, for those who are celebrating special events

 it is a popular family space

 it is an escape from the stressors of life

Approach – The Questions

Ever aware that we were imposing ourselves on the men in their private time with their families, we kept our interview to no more than three minutes.

Besides their name and connection to the child or children in their company, we posed the following open-ended prompts:

 How do you view yourself as a man?

 Who is a real man?

In response to our prompts, the majority of men sought clarification by referring to fatherhood as a marker of their understanding of self. These led invariably to emerging questions from the men, such as:

 Do you mean as a father or a parent?

Not intending to shape or influence their responses, we encouraged them to interpret their sense of “maleness” from their own perspective.



Nurturer and daughter

"Based on how I was brought up men are important in the lives of children, filling roles a mother cannot fill... security... confidence."

Anton



Nurturer and son

"As a father, I kind of have to be the eyes, the ears... to think, be mature... there is a problem now where parents trying to be their children's friends and causing them to go wayward."

Ronald



Nurturer and three children

"Well...
am... responsibility.
I think that its my primary knowledge
of what a man supposed to be...
[following] example, it is what I grab
hold of."

Joseph



Nurturer and grandchildren

"The mistakes I made as a father I
hope to correct that with my
grandchildren... the things I was
supposed to do, but didn't do like
have more time with them, give
guidance... A man is the leader of the
house... does not mean dictatorial...
to act in collaboration – wash, clean,
help raise the children, spend time
helping with the kids, be supportive,
help them to be what they want."

Solomon



Nurturer and son

"A real man means responsibility right, for all the things he does whether it right or wring, makes decisions... it have no book to tell you how to be a father. Try your best to train your children in the right way... how to be themselves... don't let another person dictate your reality... Know who you are. Never make a child what you want him to be. Let that child be what he wants to be."

Richard



Nurturer and daughter

"Proper care and maintaining of a household... Be the best father you could be. You have to have plenty love."

Shane



Nurturer and newborn

[A man is being] "responsible, hardworking, it is about my wife and my family. It is just the responsibility of a man to take care of his family in their wants, needs, love and affection... every possible way. Have confidence and they will have confidence in you... be prepared, make breakfast, put on pampers... Just be prepared to make things easier for her [referring to wife]."

Al



Nurturer and infant

"Boy, it don't have any words to describe that [referring to being a man]... responsibilities, trying my best... seeing them grow up healthy and strong. That's it."

Vishnu



Nurturer and daughter

"Being a man is being a father... A lot of people depending on you. When I watch my daughter, I see me. I try my best to be there."

Jack



Nurturer and daughter

"A man is family... relationship with kids and parents... there are a lot of challenges in society especially if you have to go to the legal system as a man. The court is basically structured towards the female so whether you are good father or not you go in there for whatever reason, you already have a strike down in a sort of way. There needs to be a restructuring and in-depth investigation before a decision is made. Some women are very unfit mothers, let's be honest, some men too. There are a lot of men that are deadbeat dads out here, but you can't... [have] Peter pay for Paul. Parenting is life-changing... never thought it would have been hard... new respect for my parents... but I want more [children]. It is a wonderful experience, but a lot of challenges."

Sterling

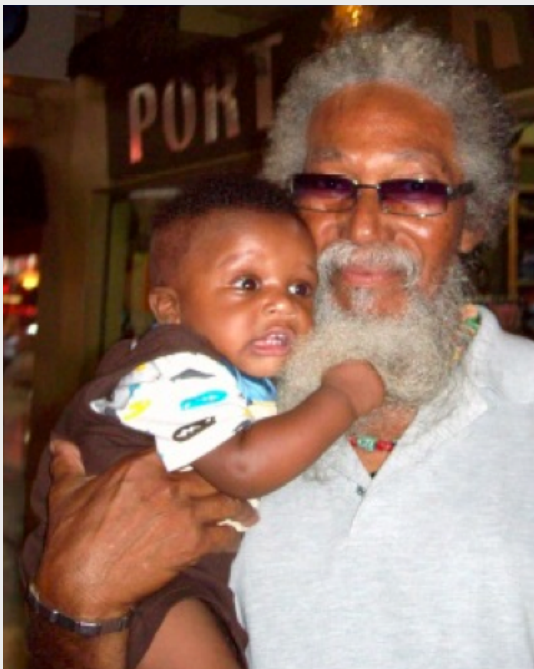


Nurturer, wife and son

[A man is] "Having responsibility and being able to take care if that responsibility... be independent. I believe in Christ. When there are challenges you pray to God for guidance."

Gary

Authors' note: Gary insisted that his wife be included in the photo, since "there could be no family without her."



Nurturer and grandson

[A man is] "Loving, faithful, industrious, happy-go-lucky, kind-hearted, sometime-ish; if we don't have that we are just hypocrites. A leader, a teacher, learn from each other. Some people would say – role model, but I wouldn't say role model, each one must teach one. If you don't have faith, not in yourself alone, in God [too], you cannot stand. A real man is the image of the Creator."

Steve



Nurturer and son

[A man is] "Easy going, understanding... I try to achieve, taking care of my family, being responsible, providing the best for my son – education, what he likes. Live for the simple things in life... we create our problems. Anything I do that is not right, I want my son to correct me. I don't have a servant, I have a wife."

Garnett



Nurturer and grandson

"You have to be responsible. Being a parent and grandparent is very intriguing, sharing whatever experiences they have, spending time with them."

Clarie



Nurturer and niece

"A man is being comfortable with who you are. What I consider myself to be may not be what society considers me to be. It has to deal with stereotypes and I don't follow stereotypes. I need to define myself as an individual. Being responsible in the home whether you are father, uncle or son, taking care of the home, being the breadwinner, playing significant role emotionally, financially, spiritually. [He makes reference to taking his niece to buy a church dress]. Seeing the male person in a positive way and taking away the negative vibe associated with it. [being a parent] requires a measure of patience."

Raymond



Nurturer and grandson

[A man is] "supportive, understanding, trying to understand how a woman is, taking care of the family, bearing the brunt of the family, be a breadwinner, don't spend too much – save. [Referring to the niece, who's dad is away] Yamael's job is to bring something for her to eat, make sure she does not eat too much junk... I whisper in her ears "you will be successful one day". She don't understand it, but I talk to her. Giver her confidence."

Yamael



Nurturer and son

"[A man is] "someone who is responsible at the end of the day; responsible for your own actions for the the younger ones. I wasn't prepared for the little challenges that pop up [as a father], but you have to work around it. I want my son to be an independent thinker."

Devon



Nurturer and twin daughters

[A man is] "basically being responsible... Just responsibility and taking care of your responsibility; like things you used to do before you stop doing – stop smoking; drinking; liming... my family is first."

Dale



Nurturer and sons

[Being a man involves] "family life, responsibility, dealing with the challenges of fatherhood – time management. You want your children to be better than you."

Leslie

Sharing our Experiences

This exploration of men at the mall has revealed much to us:

- ✚ We encountered a wide variety of men, in terms of age, ethnicity, and class. They were engaged in similar pursuits in the mall, but were each experiencing family life in unique and valid ways.
- ✚ Every father, without fail, said that a real man must take up his responsibility.
- ✚ It would have been useful to probe what they regard as being the responsibilities of men. Those who were more expansive in their response said that their responsibilities included "being there for the family" and "providing".

- ✚ We acknowledge that the simplicity of our method and the brevity of our interview did not allow for much probing, and for the men to reflect on the complexities of “being a man” and “being a nurturer”.
- ✚ We feel however that their visceral responses are nonetheless valid, because it signals what is immediately significant to each of them.
- ✚ Some men were demonstrably guarded in their response in the presence of significant others. We feel that, free of this influence, we may have received either different responses and/or more substantial responses.

What do you think?

- ✚ To what extent do men participate in nurturing?
- ✚ Are men more involved in family life now than before? Or is it the same?
- ✚ Are there barriers to male-nurturing? If, yes what are they?
- ✚ What counts as sufficient, quality and significant male nurturing?
- ✚ How can you encourage male-nurturing in family life?

¹ Licks refers to floggings

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Bathhouse Outreach to the Gay Asian Diaspora in Toronto

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Abstract

One might wonder how this short reflection on outreach to East/Southeast Asian Gay Men who use Bathhouses in Toronto fits within the *Caribbean Review of Gender Studies*. Firstly, the Caribbean is a diverse space, with diasporic East Asian (Chinese) and Southeast Asian (Javanese) communities. Secondly, the Caribbean itself is not tied to geography, and may be found wherever its diasporas are located (e.g., Toronto). When we migrate our diasporas are made, un-made and re-made, coming together in ways that move across boundaries. For example, while Richard, Daniel, Peter, Ryan, and Brian are East/Southeast Asian men, Nalini is not (her family is from the Caribbean). However, as 'Asians' or 'people of colour' (collectivities borne of migration histories), we work across the multicultural silos and gendered borderlines that seek to separate and contain us. Despite recent critiques of solidarity, we still need each other. In that spirit, this essay explores the practice of community-making in a 'fugitive space' (the bathhouse) through the peer outreach activities of Asian Community AIDS Services (ACAS – a community organization) located in Toronto. We thank the editors of this special issue for the opportunity to think across locations, multiple identities, and community-building practices in the diaspora(s).

Keywords: Bathhouse, Caribbean, HIV, sexuality, masculinity

Introduction

Over the last 25 years or so, community agencies which grew out of activist agendas have come under increasing pressure to act as social service delivery agents, with services delineated by the goals of funders. In the process of accountability (to funders, not necessarily communities), programs are strictly assessed through tools like logic models or outcome measurements. Such an auditing of experiences obscures the richness of our community conversations, struggles, and sources of strength; it fails to scratch the surface of our emotional lives, or speak to our political investments.¹ Consequently, ACAS has undertaken this short reflection piece primarily to share the values that stand behind our 'outcome measurements.' We hope to spark further reflection on the cultural as well as interpersonal context that belies a deceptively simple question — what is peer outreach?

History of ACAS

ACAS opened its doors in 1994, following the integration of three HIV/AIDS programs in Toronto serving the East and Southeast Asian communities. However, our roots are much longer, nurtured by Gay Asian activists in the city, whose activism was driven by the need for survival (both emotionally and physically). In the words of Dr. Alan Li, one of the co-founders of Gay Asian AIDS project in Toronto (an ACAS predecessor):

I remember the first client of Gay Asian AIDS Project, Chris, who was referred to us by Public Health after being found starving and lying on his apartment floor, despairing in isolation with no available support. With almost no staffing, we mobilized great community volunteer effort to help him fulfill his last wish: to be reunited with his family... Two nights before Chris embarked on his journey home, I brought Chris some congee for supper. He asked me why I “was so

nice to him.” I answered, rather instinctively, “We are a family, a community, if we don’t help each other, who’s going to help us?” It was that sense of family and community that inspired and drove the passion that built first the Gay Asian AIDS Project and eventually ACAS.²

The impact of similar encounters over time informs our objective to work in a *culturally appropriate* manner. We provide support, education, and outreach services to diasporic Asians, and Asians with HIV/AIDS, in a collaborative, empowering, and non-discriminatory manner.

These aims are more than just words in a report; they breathe life into our programs. Consider the Bathhouse Outreach Program, which has been part of ACAS’s complement from the beginning. Looking back, Peter Ho (our first bathhouse peer outreach worker) recalls that the organization was operating in crisis mode due to the devastating impact of HIV/AIDS in the early ‘90s.³ Agency staff and volunteers were deeply affected, many in mourning due to both personal and professional losses in the community. With pressing resolve (and desperation), we felt the weight of responsibility to go beyond HIV/AIDS as a public health concern. It was a scary and uncertain time that required what community, at its best, can offer — an embrace of acceptance and a refuge of understanding. We explore the innovations of health promotion/ sexual health outreach practices emerging out of this experience below.

Why the bathhouse?

ACAS provides sexual health and health promotion workshops to East and Southeast Asian men living in the diaspora (Toronto), and distributes free condoms and lube through bathhouses. The main goal of outreach in this setting is to reduce stigma among patrons, and promote safe sex.

“A Gay bathhouse is a business establishment (that may be open 24/7) in which Gay men and men who have sex with men (MSM) meet for consensual sex and/or to socialize with other men. For some, it is part of the rites of passage into the Gay culture. ... Most bathhouses have lockable rooms with a small bed, a dark area for cruising, a lounge area where Gay video porn is shown or a small bar/snack area.”⁴

A bathhouse is for sex, first and foremost. It is a space that allows for casual hook-ups within confined spaces. One can rent a locker or a room cheaply for a short period, instead of going to a hotel, or a park, or a stranger's home. As one patron says, “There's also a sense of security because people see you check in, and if you go missing in the bathhouse, the person you went with would be questioned. So it's about safety for me.” There is also an etiquette to bathhouse encounters: “I am outgoing. But sometimes I'm not that way. It seems like in the bathhouse there's more possibilities. If you're not interested in someone, you can just tell them you're not interested. In the bathhouse, you just go, sorry I'm not interested. You can be very direct, instead of beating around the bush.” Because it's clear you're looking for sex, the approach is straightforward, as is the rejection. Brian Ly, our Outreach Worker, describes the environment: “This is a place where you should be free to do whatever you want — like “Hey you're cute, you're hot, you're sexy — and not care how your personality is outside of the bathhouse.”

Gay bathhouses first came to the wider public attention of Toronto during the aggressive police raids of 1981.⁵ Moral indecency and sexual deviancy charges against patrons of bathhouses spurred the mobilization of Toronto's Gay community, and an organized movement was born (our Stonewall moment). However, raids on Toronto bathhouses continued well into the '90s; so ACAS was working within a relatively underground setting, in the beginning.

It is difficult to explain why the bathhouse became a site of outreach for Gay Asian men or Asian MSM without understanding the experience of diaspora. The details of lived experiences (both immigration and sexual journeys) are documented in a groundbreaking collection of thirteen oral histories of Toronto's Gay Asian community.⁶ *Celebrasian* represented the recovery of Asian Gay men from invisibility on the Toronto Gay scene. Peopled with individual life stories that doubled as shared experiences (e.g., expectations of professional success in Canada from family members, isolation due to separation from family as well as the twin impact of homophobia and racism), these stories were also an important recovery of the self, in relation to others.

Several of the individuals interviewed in the collection mention the bathhouse as a site of sexual discovery. In this context, it is important to remember that the '90s was still a challenging time, since there were few places for men to meet men — a bar, a public park or a bathhouse. Although immigrants comprised over 40% of Toronto's population at the time, the Gay experience was (is) portrayed as dominantly white. So for new immigrants who may or may not identify as Gay, a bathhouse offered a relatively private space. The softly lit showers and roomettes of a bathhouse are a space unlike any other. And community health outreach practices in this space must acknowledge the reality of private questionings, sexual tensions and desires of patrons (the personal) while simultaneously engaging in conversations about sexual health and well-being (i.e., public health). A personal account of the first time in a bathhouse provides a vivid description of the dynamics:

... It's intimidating. Like I was excited, but also very nervous. I didn't know whether other patrons would be interested in me, maybe I'm too Asian or something like that. I went the first couple of times there by myself. I was maybe 20 or 21. At that time, I wasn't very secure in myself. There was a lot of low self-esteem there, for myself. It was a way to kind of build-up that esteem. Maybe some guy would be interested in me? At the same time, it's such a weird conflict,

because you still feel self-conscious when someone doesn't want to hook up with you. ...There would be nights where I would be walking around the halls for hours, like waiting, hoping someone would try to pick me up, eventually I felt like my standards would lower, and I would just hook up with anyone.⁷

A bathhouse in Toronto can be a place of pure sexual liberation or sexual nightmare when facing rejection due to your skin colour or body type.⁸ Many of the issues that stem from racism can be seen in the bathhouse by Asian men. Rejection ranges from verbal to non-verbal gestures coming from the mainstream (white) community when cruising in the bathhouse. Hence, some Asian men — even more so for newcomers — who have been rejected many times would have no negotiation power when it came to safe sex in this setting. In the next section, we discuss the values behind our peer outreach program prompted by this complex environment.

OUR VALUES

Community-Specific Outreach within a Bathhouse

Bathhouse users comprise a unique community, one that is different from those in the 'Gay village.' As Ryan Tran (our Men's Program Coordinator) explains, individuals who go to bathhouses tend not to be a part of the party or clubbing scene, or for that matter any other Gay scene -- except the bathhouse. Perhaps they live in the suburbs. They might be more isolated. Some might not be "out of the closet," and have female partners or family obligations. Or perhaps they feel unable to come out to their friends or parents. A bathhouse offers a private space, but also a rare social connection with others like themselves. Yet their visit might be anonymous and sometimes associated with guilt or shame. For this reason, ACAS places a priority on confidentiality. Most of the men who attend our 'Asian Bathhouse night' are older (approx.

35-50yrs, although some younger men do attend). Many are immigrants, or men visiting Toronto on business trips, or those who are simply curious. As Brian says, "a bathhouse is kinda like a bucket list thing for being Gay, you have to go once just to experience it."

Although the Gay Asian bathhouse user population is not homogenous, there can be a labeling of those who use the bathhouse as 'slutty,' casting blame for the spread of HIV/AIDS or STIs:

People say, can't you get an STI just from sitting on the seats? People associate it with back alley way kind of situations. The bathhouse is lower level than Craigslist. If you're willing to put yourself in a bathhouse, then it's like oh, you really don't care about yourself.

Despite this stigma among the wider community, the bathhouse can be a crucial place to be oneself (or to reconcile the pain of not being fully oneself). It is a private place where some Asian men feel safe and interact with familiar faces. It's a culture of its own. While it is a place for sex, it is also a space of freedom:

Ever since I found a bath-house, I went every day. Any excuse you find. It was very exciting for me. I haven't seen men with men before. When you go to the steam room, you actually see people doing it, so it was exciting. You could join in too, it was neat. But most of the time I did not feel comfortable about joining in because I knew, in the back of my mind, about AIDS. ...But I enjoyed the environment in the bath-house and bars, because that's where I can be Gay. I can say this, I can say that.⁹

While freeing, the bathhouse is not necessarily inclusive. It is, like the rest of Canadian society, a normatively white space ("I was an Asian immigrant living

in a white western culture, where blondness and blue eyes were features to have. I had neither").¹⁰ Hierarchies of desirability place white Gay men at the apex, and power dynamics flowed through preconceived racial and sexual stereotypes. These stereotypes served in subtle and not so subtle ways to disadvantage Gay Asian men, or to limit interactions within predefined roles (sex is often a dance with power). For example, Asian men (in the Canadian diaspora, but also the Caribbean) have been stereotyped as weak, under-sexed or sexless (i.e., undesirable), and to a large extent invisible within the Gay community.¹¹ So how do Gay Asian men see themselves as liberated but also disempowered within this space of the bathhouse? How do they negotiate inter-racial sexual relationships in this setting? These questions were important considerations in designing our peer outreach strategies.

Mindful of the marginalization of Asian sexualities as well as alienation within white Gay networks, ACAS prioritized visual strategies as part of our outreach program. Relying on trans-national networks (with images coming from Asia to Canada), and building on the strength of volunteers with creative skills, ACAS designed posters portraying Asian Gay men's sexual intimacies (akin to 'Black is beautiful' campaigns). These posters were displayed inside the bathhouse, even though at first they were repeatedly torn down (reflecting an initial resistance to see difference within Gay identity).¹² However, ACAS staff persisted, feeling it was important to send a message that "Asian men were not eunuchs." Reclaiming sexiness, Asian men had a legitimate right to the space. In other words, visual images serve to tell us our place of belonging in the world.¹³ The posters became part of an activist intervention to promote positive images of Gay Asian sexuality—and humanity—among bathhouse patrons.

Visual messages embracing Asian masculinities and sexualities remain an important strategy to this day. We continue to use posters, changing them every month. However, we've modified our approach. As Richard Utama, our Men's Sexual Health Coordinator notes, "representation can be a double-edged sword." The original posters reflected Asian models with chiselled bodies, or the

standard norms of desirability with a different face. It was a needed intervention at the time into Toronto's bathhouses due to the dearth of Asian men represented as sexy. But with feedback from participants of the Asian Bathhouse Night, we're now using images of our "sexpert" volunteers (peer educators). They represent real people, with real bodies; our interventions are constantly evolving, responsive to community needs.

You might question whether posters are necessary with new technologies and hook-up apps like *Grindr* or *Jack'd*, one would think there are more opportunities to see and be seen. However, Grindr users not infrequently specify undesirable traits, such as: "No Asians/No Fats/No Femmes."¹⁴ As Ryan tells us, "From what we see on *Grindr* and *Jack'd*, there's a lot of stereotypes about being Asian: you're too small, too skinny. You don't see a lot of stronger images for Asian men, or attractive Asian men. We're always the smart geek." In the bathhouse, as well as online, rejection and discrimination intertwine.

Therefore, there's an ongoing need to counter stereotypes that devalues one's racial/sexual being, even more so in a bathhouse — an inherently sexual environment where one's self-esteem is directly on the line (Is he going to look you up and down, only to turn away?). With that in mind, ACAS has collaborated with Spa Excess, a Toronto Bathhouse, to host monthly Asian Bathhouse nights since 2006. And as one patron says: "We have made the space our own."

At Work and Play

"We try to make Asian bathhouse night as open and non-judgmental as possible. As friendly as possible. ...A typical bathhouse night is more intimidating, you're usually by yourself, the lighting is dim. With Asian Bathhouse night, we have volunteers to

greet you. They will talk to you. It's creates a comfortable, social environment."¹⁵

The bathhouse can be a liberatory space breaking down the walls between the public and the private. However, this also presents challenges for a peer model of outreach because the bathhouse is a transgressive space, a place where certain lines have already been crossed. Taking this into account, ACAS strived to develop a peer outreach model (i.e., recruiting staff and volunteers who use bathhouses) that merge both personal needs with public health imperatives.

For one, this means recognizing sexual confidence as central to one's health and well-being. By tailoring our outreach activities to the community (e.g., sharing erotic tongue-in-cheek tips such as how to give the best blow job, playing suggestive games with fruit, or providing water massages), ACAS consciously incorporates fun activities (conducted in English with the help of volunteer interpreters) that include a sexual playfulness. For example, on Asian Bathhouse night we might offer sea salt scrubs to participants. "It's an opportunity for guys to touch each other (non-genital contact), to practice enjoying their bodies and to express their admiration of other body types. It exfoliates skin, and promotes a healthy body image. And it helps make people comfortable with different body types — older, younger, bigger, smaller." Games also help counter the awkwardness of public health strategies, like handing out condoms and lube — they break the ice. Another game, "Fist for an egg" involved "a box with a picture of a guy bending over, there's a hole where his butt is, so you have to stick your hand into the hole and grab an egg, and inside the egg was a condom or a candy, and a question on HIV."¹⁶ The game gets lots of giggles, but it also helps us to assess the knowledge of patrons around STIs (some individuals for example, think you can get HIV by kissing). It allows us a point of entry to address misinformation and design workshops outside of the bathhouse to elaborate on sexual health.

All in all, these activities serve a dual purpose. For one, they help to counter stereotypes of Asian men in mainstream society as boring, one-dimensional model minorities. Secondly, they encourage communication. In the bathhouse, much communication between sexual partners occurs through non-verbal cues. In such an environment, assumptions can go unspoken. But to negotiate safe sex, it's important to be able to speak up and to be heard. Flirty, enthusiastic, playful communication (e.g., What kind of condom do you like? What flavour? Ribbed or unribbed for your pleasure?) can be an opening to build sexual acceptance and assertiveness through an affirming approach — because if you don't feel desirable and confident, you just might feel increased pressure to have sex without a condom.¹⁷

Relying on a peer model also means that a bathhouse is a place of both work and play for staff and volunteers. In the beginning, staff would wear a towel and T-shirt with a badge identifying themselves as outreach workers to make a clear distinction between themselves and patrons. However, in recognition that the T-shirt created a sense of difference and separation, staff now dress the same as anyone else in the bathhouse, wearing a towel (though with underwear underneath); an ACAS badge is pinned to the towel. "We're trying to incorporate ourselves, and blend in, so that we seem more approachable. We try to follow the rules of the bathhouse. And be comfortable with how we look."¹⁸ It took a few dialogues to make the parties involved including Toronto Public Health (who recognize 'bathhouses present public health challenges') to agree on our 'blending in' strategy.

Daniel Le, the former Men's Sexual Health Promoter, who initiated this special 'dress code' adds, "Peer led programs only work if we and volunteers conform to the target population environment. At the Asian Bathhouse Event, the volunteers and staff should not stand out from the people and environment we work in."

The philosophy underlying this is similar to the reasoning behind the posters — both are an embrace of the Gay Asian man's body in sexual settings. A peer outreach model recognizes and reveals a certain vulnerability (e.g., wearing only a towel even if one doesn't have 6-pack abs) as a necessary component of breaking down hierarchies — a way of relating through the body.¹⁹ The outreach worker then is not only concerned with public health, but is also a member of the community. However for this to work, staff and volunteers must be clear on ethics, codes of conduct (e.g., no sexual contact during work hours), and the organization should have a sexual harassment policy that covers staff as well as volunteers as part of a wider understanding of safe spaces.

Volunteers

We encourage our volunteers to be comfortable in the bathhouse setting, as it might not be for everybody. One volunteer, for example, tried it out, but felt that the constant eyes on him were “too judge-y.” He decided it was not the right environment for him. In addition to the gaze, which can serve to police the bathhouse space for bodies of certain sizes, shapes and colour, there is also the issue of body contact. A patron might walk by and lightly brush up against your arm. Volunteering in a bathhouse also depends on one's comfort level with touch. Another volunteer who started off with some anxiety due to body image, actually began to embrace it, claiming himself a Panda (an Asian version of a Bear). So for some volunteers it might be an empowering space of self-acceptance, even inner peace. We also try to ensure our target population, including volunteers, has better negotiation skills by attending our workshop and eventually co-facilitating workshops. By taking ownership of the event, they run and control their environment.

Empowerment

Race and racism are issues that cannot be ignored in the daily lives of our participants. It is ever present, and can fray one's nerves. In a bathhouse setting, however, participants are coming primarily for pleasure (rather than to attend an anti-oppression workshop). As an organization, we have learned that there is a time and place for consciousness-raising around anti-oppression. "Angry Asian" outrage (which we embrace) is an important and necessary catalyst for change, but as Daniel notes, one of the ironies of anti-oppression is that it can be oppressive. Many immigrants and newcomers to Toronto come here with dreams. These dreams of the future might be their only source of protection against the unexpected humiliations and setbacks of being a queer, racialized newcomer. Thus rather than focusing on discussing and analyzing oppression, Daniel focused firstly on "carving out a space for myself and others like me." In the bathhouse, we focus on nurturing what's positive, being comfortable with one's self and one's community. In other words, we support each other in the journey of coming into ourselves, to give each other strength. And on a practical note, starting with heavy issues and problems could be considered 'being too serious' for some and might become a deterrent for them to join the bathhouse night. Moreover, there are other avenues to have those discussions.²⁰

Finding Community within Anonymity

It might seem paradoxical to build community out of a space valued for anonymity. After all, if you go to a bathhouse, you're going for sex. Socializing is secondary. However:

We want to show support for everyone. We want to show support for people who want to stay anonymous. Like making sure, even though you don't want to be seen in the Gay community or be exposed, there is still a space where you can have a small social

interaction: to have that kind of connection with at least somebody in the community. Because it's anonymous, people think it more dirty than it would be through messaging. Through messaging, you might talk to a person for a while and know them. But in a bathhouse, you might just hold them in, have sex with them, and leave. That's one of the stigmas, that it's anonymous, not social. That it's just dirty, raunchy hook ups. But it's not really. Sometimes it's really rewarding, you meet someone new and really nice if you're willing to be social. But most people go for anonymous hook ups, so there's a back and forth with it.²¹

In addition, within our Asian communities, especially among family, many don't know anything about LGBT issues, "like they only think it's their child who happens to be Gay, so we're trying to raise visibility."²² "There's still a lot of stigma in the Asian community, it's still taboo. We're trying to shed light on the fact that there are other Gay Asians, queer Asians".²³ Being a bathhouse patron does not necessarily mean one eschews a sense of communal identity; there is potential for community belonging, even in the most anonymous or fleeting of connections.

COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT AND PEER OUTREACH:

Grounding our Values

The values that underpin our outreach program are grounded in sex-positive attitudes and promotion of positive body image, as well as a collaborative and mutually supportive approach. These values matter because collectively they form part of the everyday process of resistance that empowers sexual health among racialized, stigmatized, and minoritized communities. They also matter because they drive our outcome measurement results — According to the Sexperts survey, our bathhouse volunteers reported safer sex behaviour

with both regular and casual partners, having shared knowledge about safer sex behaviour almost every time they had sex in the past six months at survey period, and having their stronger sense of belonging to the workplace, church, school, their community, the bathhouse itself, and Gay groups.²⁴ Further, on average, four to eight Asian Men get tested for HIV during the Asian Bathhouse Event. Volunteers and their peers verbally stated that the testing is accessible and would consider to get tested during the Asian Bathhouse Event.²⁵

Our outreach program works on a personal as well socio-cultural level to inform our imagining of ourselves, as well as claiming spaces of belonging, while taking control of our sexual health. Although we are committed to social transformation, we emphasize that revolutionary change rarely happens overnight. Change requires an investment over a long period of time, and occurs in barely perceptible ways that gradually accumulate over time. This work flows through our inner selves — through the courage of sharing our stories, revealing our flesh, and opening our communities. We believe in the importance of going inwards (hence this paper), to give voice and make visible the things that are sometimes seen as private, as integral to a strategy of combatting homophobia and racism. From the book *Celebrasian* to the Bathhouse Outreach Program we work to know ourselves in our own skin, and through our relations with others. We stress our interdependence.

The examples discussed are nuanced forms of community empowerment responding to the specifics of community, not a model which seeks to replicate technocratic or prescriptive pathways to “participation,” “training” and “leadership.”²⁶ Peter, who started the ‘Sexpert’ peer educators program by recruiting those who are bathhouse patrons, placed the importance of peers as sexual health educators and experts. However, this is not a model of leadership training that incorporates “transformation.” Richard is suspicious of this term, with its coded colonialist connotations (akin to bringing progress or civilization). As Richard says, “We are not to be converted, nor are we butterflies. We already came here with skills, we need to build upon what we already possess. It’s about

using what's available to you." Rather than transforming diasporic community members into "enlightened" leaders who ultimately serve to reinforce power structures through the concession of token leadership roles, Daniel worked from the basis that what we have in common can be a diffuse catalyst for wider social change (e.g., breaking down boundaries for queer racialized groups) in ways that are measured, as well beyond measure. Ryan and Brian, as a younger generation taking the program forward, continue our emphasis of working with all available resources (including personal networks) to build community ("many volunteers didn't have other Gay Asian friends, we've now become tight-knit, because now it's also their social circle"). Over twenty-five years of bathhouse outreach, we realize we cannot work with distance from the community, because we belong to the community too.

This brief discussion suggests that the response to the question of how one locates oneself as both a sexualized and racialized person in the diaspora does not necessarily have to be through gradual acclimatization to a mainstream queer identity. Taking into account the social positioning of diasporic racial and sexual 'minorities' cannot be dismissed as identity politics, rather this work acknowledges that race and sexuality are corporeal and visceral lived experiences that come to be embodied in particular spaces (like the bathhouse). Some of the diversity of community experiences which sustain Toronto (such as the Asian bathhouse night) occurs deliberately outside of mainstream norms. This deserves to be valued, at the very least, because it gives us a delicious friction between bodies, and against bodies, that are alive to the process of our collective liberation.

¹ As Janice Stein pointed out over a decade ago, a 'cult of efficiency' (measuring effectiveness quantitatively through numbers served, incidence reduced etc.) cannot address the full scope of accountability, and can even detract from accountability by channeling energies towards checking boxes rather than thinking about human relations. See Stein, J. *The Cult of Efficiency* (Toronto: Anansi, 2001). Many argue that placing numbers before people is part of a wider project management strategy borne out of neoliberalism.

² Li, A.. 'A Journey of Love and Pride,' in *ACAS 15th Anniversary* (Toronto: ACAS, 2009).

³ While recent films, such as *How to Survive a Plague* (2013) and *We Were Here* (2011) have highlighted the AIDS crisis and activist/community responses in New York and San Francisco respectively, they have neglected the experiences of immigrants in the context of difference and social hierarchies within Gay communities, even though both cities have large immigrant populations (New York is often called a Caribbean city, given the size of the diaspora residing there). In Toronto, the AIDS crisis became the genesis of LGBTQ NGO's for people of colour.

⁴ Brian Sebastian and Daniel Le. *Bathhouse Night Event Resource Manual* (Toronto: ACAS, 2009).

⁵ Police raided 4 bathhouses in Toronto in 1981, resulting in the largest mass arrest in Canada since the Front de Libération du Québec kidnapped two government officials, killing one, causing Prime Minister Trudeau to implement the War Measures Act. In response, the Gay community mobilized and Toronto's first Pride Parade was held the year after. The mass arrest numbers were not surpassed until the G20 Summit in Toronto in 2010.

⁶ *Celebrasian: Shared Lives. A Oral History of Gay Asians.* (Toronto: Gay Asian Toronto, 1996).

⁷ Tran, R. Pers. Comm. June 25, 2014.

⁸ For further discussion on how body image ideals impact racialized Gay and Bisexual men's well-being, see David Brennan, Rusty Sonleymanor, Kenta Asakura, et.al. *Colour Matters: Body Image, Racism and Well-being among Gay and bisexual Men of Colour in Toronto.* (Toronto: Imagine Men's Health Study, 2013)

⁹ Ho, P. *Celebrasian: Shared Lives. A Oral History of Gay Asians.* (Toronto: Gay Asian Toronto, 1996).

¹⁰ Goh, A. *Celebrasian: Shared Lives. A Oral History of Gay Asians.* (Toronto: Gay Asian Toronto, 1996).

¹¹ For a personal account of negotiating the perceived effeminacy of Gay Asian men in Toronto (or a 'Rice Queen' dynamic), see Alexis Carrington's story in *Celebrasian* (pp.5-6).

¹² For a discussion on the impact of the visual void of Asian Lesbian and Gay sexual representation, see (Chinese- Trinidadian-Canadian scholar/film-maker): Fung, Richard. "Looking for My Penis: The Eroticized Asian in Gay Video Porn." In *Bad Object-choices* (Eds). *How Do I Look? Queer Film & Video* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1991, pp. 145-168).

¹³ To quote the insights of Questlove from the band, The Roots (though he is speaking in the context of hip hop):

Resistance here doesn't mean revolution. ... Resistance means using art for the things that it does best, which is to create human portraits and communicate ideas and forge a climate where people of different races or classes are known to you because they make themselves known. ... It opens the circuit of empathy. <http://www.vulture.com/2014/05/questlove-part-6-does-black-culture-need-to-care-about-hip-hop.html>

¹⁴ See Artrip, Nick. "College Feminisms: No Fat, No Femme: The Politics of Grindr <http://thefeministwire.com/2013/11/no-fat-no-femme-the-politics-of-grindr/> <November 8, 2013>

¹⁵ Tran, R. Pers. Comm. June 25, 2014

¹⁶ Ly, .B. Pers Comm. June 25, 2014

¹⁷ For data on condom usage see: Poon, M. K., Wong, J. P., Sutdhibhasilp, N., Ho, P. T., & Wong, B. (2011). Condom use among East and Southeast Asian men attending a Gay bathhouse in Toronto. *The Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality*, 20(3), 67-74.

[T]hese men chose not one but, rather, a combination of reasons for engaging in unprotected anal sex. It is thus important to develop holistic and culturally relevant strategies that address other risk-related issues such as substance use and social isolation ... Our findings nevertheless showed that many of the participants had multiple sexual partners and had engaged in unprotected anal sex with at least one casual partner in the past six months.

¹⁸ Le, D. Pers. Comm, 2014.

¹⁹ "Most Gay men in the U.S. are so concerned with physical shape. I feel the Caucasian male is naturally in better shape. Usually the Asians have smaller bone structure. So the Asian Gay male can easily be intimidated...."; a telling interview on the importance of body image in *Men of Color: A Context for Service to Homosexually Active Men* (New York: Routledge, 2012, p.129).

²⁰ "If we want to do a workshop like that, we kind of have to mask it, like Daniel's workshop "Taste the Rainbow" – it's cute. This workshop was focused on expanding your [inter-racial dating] preferences." (Ly, B. Pers. Comm., 2014)

²¹ Ly, B. Pers. Comm, June 25, 2014.

²² Tran, R. Pers. Comm, June 25, 2014.

²³ Tran, R. Pers. Comm. June 25, 2014.

²⁴ Ho, P., Sutdhibhasilp, N., Poon, M., Brown, G. et. al. *Characteristics of Asian Bathhouse Users and Distinguishing Characteristics of those Willing to Become Sexperts*. (ACAS: Toronto, 2006).

²⁵ *Asian MSM Project Report* (ACAS, June 2013), submitted to funder (AIDS Prevention Community Investment Program).

²⁶ See for example: Chun, Lipsitz & Shin "AIWA Takes Stock of Itself: Immigrant Workers at the Center of Social Change" *Kalfou* . (2010, pp. 127-32).



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



Sexual Violence and the State in Guyana: Reflecting on the Colwyn Harding Case¹

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On January 10, 2014, a story surfaced in the Kaieteur News in Guyana of Colwyn Harding, a 23-year old African-Guyanese man hospitalized at the Georgetown Public Hospital (GPH). Harding suffered severe internal injuries allegedly caused in November 2013 when police apprehended him at the house of a friend after some goods were reported stolen (someone else was later identified and arrested). ² According to Harding, in addition to being beaten, he was sodomized by a constable with a condom covered wooden police baton in the presence of members of the Community Policing Group. Four persons (Harding, a 12-year old boy and two women, Teneisha Edwards and Tiffany Evans) were then taken to the Timehri police station where it was alleged further abuses took place in plain sight of other officers: the 12-year old was handcuffed to a bed; Harding was violently beaten again and left in a cell despite the fact that he was clearly in severe physical distress and orders were given for him to be taken for medical attention; and Tiffany Edwards, two months pregnant at the time, accused the same officer who had sexually violated Colwyn Harding of kicking her in her stomach, causing a miscarriage later.

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After spending four days in jail, Harding, Edwards and Evans were formally charged on November 19 with assaulting a police officer and disorderly conduct. Unable to raise bail, Edwards and Harding were remanded to prison.³ In mid-December, suffering from severe pain, Harding was eventually admitted to the GPH (he would spend some 33 days), where he underwent surgeries for an incarcerated inguinal hernia, with a significant portion of his intestines having to be removed. He remained handcuffed to his bed at the GPH at the time that his story became public, and the handcuffs were only removed on January 17, despite the fact that at least four days earlier he had been granted bail on his own recognizance. Harding was eventually discharged and readmitted to a private hospital where he received an independent medical examination, and in February funds were raised by the public that facilitated his travel to Jamaica for further examination and diagnosis.

Investigations into Harding's allegations only kicked into high gear after widespread outrage condemning what the Guyana Human Rights Association (GHRA) described in a press release as yet another instance of the routinization of excessive force.⁴ This was in stark contrast to the swiftness with which the trio were denied due process, and despite Colwyn Harding's mother bringing the allegations to the attention of senior members of the Guyana Police Force (GPF) in December (initially the complaint was only seen as a disciplinary issue and not one that might require criminal charges). The constable accused of the baton rape was placed – temporarily only – under arrest, and along with some other officers was transferred from the Timehri police station where the assaults allegedly took place. The Guyana Police Force's Office of Professional Responsibility (OPR) sent the file with its recommendations to the Police Complaints Authority (PCA). In mid-May, more than six months after the alleged assault and four months after the story first surfaced in the press, Chairperson of the PCA Cecil Kennard recommended to the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) that two police officers be charged and disciplinary actions be taken against five or six others. On June 3rd, a male and female constable - Devin Singh and Roselle Tilbury-Douglas – were charged with assaulting Harding “so as

to cause him actual bodily harm." No charges were recommended in the case of the alleged assault on Tiffany Edwards (in fact it does not appear to have even been a matter for consideration by the OPR and PCA).

At the very least, one might have hoped for a swift response from public officials that acknowledged the severity of the allegations and affirmed a zero-tolerance approach to police brutality. Important too would have been a public commitment to an independent investigation into the specific allegations along with reassurances offered to potential witnesses that they would be protected from intimidation. The significance of this latter point was underlined a few days after the allegations surfaced in the media, when in full view of attending nurses and while still handcuffed to his hospital bed, Colwyn Harding was assaulted by male prison officers forcibly attempting to seize a cellphone left with him by his family.

Instead, in addition to the delayed and partial charges, the public was treated to a series of utterances that can only be described as defensive, accusatory and dismissive. Guyanese President Donald Ramotar's caution against hanging people without a trial (a reference to the police officers against whom the allegations had been made) did not prevent senior officials from commenting on the case in ways that underlined that they had already reached their own conclusions. Responding to a comment that Colwyn Harding might be suffering from septicemia as a result of his injuries (in fact this led to a second surgery having to be performed), Head of the Presidential Secretariat Roger Luncheon reportedly remarked that since this condition occurred or continued to persist some two months following the alleged act, 'God must be on his side.'⁵ The Minister of Health shared selective medical information with Parliament while Harding remained chained to his hospital bed, while the following day doctors at the Georgetown Public Hospital gave a press conference; in both cases what appeared to be confidential patient information was disclosed, begging the question of patient permission about public disclosure. Despite reiterating the Government's claimed position that

persons should refrain from pronouncing on the case until investigations were complete and “a dispassionate analysis can be made,” Minister of Home Affairs Clement Rohee (under whose portfolio the matter falls) had no problem publicly musing that from his reading of preliminary reports he believed that “the case is very complicated as the allegations made are challengeable.”⁶ The opposition was accused of seeking to exploit the case for their own partisan ends against the minority government, a claim heightened by the fact that the lawyer representing Colwyn Harding, Nigel Hughes, is chairperson of the Alliance for Change (AFC), one of the opposition parties that comprises the parliamentary majority. Sections of the media were also singled out by President Ramotar and other government officials of being irresponsible and of having an agenda. In fact, were it not for the press reports, this shocking story might never have come to light in the first place, highlighting the conclusion of the United Nations Development Programme’s 2012 Caribbean Human Development Report about the importance of “external informal systems of police accountability” that include “an alert press and active, credible and organized human rights groups focused on police misconduct” (UNDP 2012, p.184).

Against this backdrop, there is understandable cynicism in the face of President Donald Ramotar’s eventual statement, close to two weeks after the story first appeared in the media, that his government is categorically against torture; skepticism undoubtedly compounded in early June by the report that a 15-year old had been arrested and shot in his mouth by a cadet officer allegedly playing Russian roulette during an interrogation over suspected stolen goods.⁷ Moreover, the official promises of an independent investigation were belied by designating the Office of Professional Responsibility (essentially police investigating themselves) and the Police Complaints Authority as lead agencies to address the matter. According to its own annual reports, the PCA received 238 written complaints in 2010 and recommended none for prosecution and just one inquest, and received 241 written complaints in 2011 but recommended not a single prosecution or inquest.⁸ It is therefore not surprising that, when reporting that security institutions across the Caribbean region are in serious crisis, the 2012

UNDP Study quoted a 2010 opinion survey carried out in Guyana in which the police force ranked 14th in response to a question about levels of trust in 15 institutions.

All this does little to reinforce public confidence that justice will be served in this case, and only contributes to a sense that, as the GHRA put it, the police “is more engaged in a cover-up than an investigation of the original brutality to Colwyn Harding.” The government’s preoccupation with accusing virtually anyone who spoke out of having a hidden political agenda should also not distract us from reflecting on what this case says about the moral and ethical fabric of Guyanese society, and in fact should be the occasion for wondering whether their response suggests that police brutality comes with the official imprimatur of state approval. Specifically, the sexual violence that Colwyn Harding was allegedly subjected to, an assault carried out in the presence of other law enforcement officers, underlines the authoritative status accorded to violent, predatory and heteronormative masculinist norms, in which the act of penetration with a police baton operates as an instrument of emasculation and violent subordination. Nor is this an isolated case. In 2009 a 15-year old held on suspected murder charges had a highly flammable liquid poured on his genitals, which were then set alight by the arresting officers (although he has since been awarded damages in the High Court, no-one has ever been arrested and brought before the courts for this gruesome and sexualized act of torture). And in January 2014, just weeks after the Harding case became news, another teenager climbed on the roof of a media house threatening suicide, alleging that he had been raped by three police officers in Georgetown.

These criminal acts, and the apparent sense among perpetrators that such sexual violence is sanctioned and that they will in fact be protected (highlighting the uneven distribution of justice that produces and is sustained by social hierarchy), occur in a context in which the supremacy of heteronormativity finds support in the law. In a 2012 study on the conditions facing LGBT persons in Guyana, Christopher Carrico concluded that the

continued criminalization of non-heterosexual relations creates an environment in which sexual minorities in Guyana must regularly contend with “harassment, abuse, arrest, prosecution and conviction of crimes,” and where they also reported being fearful of reporting crimes committed against them (Carrico 2012, p. 4).

It is against this backdrop that we must reckon with the fact that, notwithstanding Colwyn Harding's allegations of sodomy with a baton at the hands of the police, and two independent medical reports that found physical evidence consistent with his claims, the DPP directed that the police officers be charged simply with assault.⁹ At one level, this exemplifies the absence of effective implementation and enforcement of the recently passed and potentially far-reaching Sexual Offences Act (SOA), reinforcing a growing sense that sexual assaults occur in Guyana in an environment of relative impunity.¹⁰ The DPP's failure to invoke the SOA in this case is also instructive in that it reveals how the crime allegedly visited upon the body of Colwyn Harding did not appear legible to the state as an act of horrific sexual violence against a young man in police custody.¹¹ It is reinforced by the official responses (reaching as far up as the President) to Harding's allegations: belatedly, and only under public pressure, addressing the complaint as possibly entailing a criminal act; the repeated violation of due process; the disclosure of confidential records by medical professionals entrusted with his care; publicly doubting and even ridiculing his story. Disappeared from all of this is the original allegation of sexual violation.

It is important to consider how such illegibility shapes and is shaped by hegemonic notions of masculinity. Accusing Harding and his lawyer of being part of an opposition conspiracy to extort huge sums of money from the state (through claims of damages), an editorial in the taxpayer-funded state newspaper, the *Guyana Chronicle*, went on to state:

Now he [the lawyer] is trying to get millions of taxpayers' money

through allegations of sodomy allegedly committed on a criminal with a history of armed robbery, who is reputed to live an alternative lifestyle... One wonders how that doctor is so convinced that Harding was roughly sodomised by a policeman wielding a baton and not one of his "clients". Be that as it may, Government needs to take steps that the treasury is not raped anymore by members of the Opposition and their "clients".¹²

In this remarkable passage, it is the accuser who becomes the perpetrator, and the entire Guyanese public who emerge as his victim. There is a deeply racialized subtext in the move to associate Colwyn Harding with the divisive arena of party politics, a chain of equivalence between Blackness, criminality and a political opposition that threatens to return the country to the days of electoral fraud and African-Guyanese political domination.¹³

Moreover, Harding's claims are dismissed not just because he is identified as someone who according to the editorial has a criminal past (and who therefore does not deserve due process), but crucially because of suppositions that he is homosexual and further that he engages in work - sex work - that entails deviant and disreputable acts. In fact, it is difficult not to see the editorial as suggesting that non-normative sexualities are equivalent, in this case, to armed robbery, that is that they are criminal (at the very least the 'alternative lifestyle' reinforces the claim of criminality here). Through this chain of equivalences, Harding's claim is rendered not just suspect (even impossible) but as a fraudulent, opportunistic, criminal allegation itself. His apparent rape is thus transmogrified into the potential rape of the treasury, displacing state violence and the specifically sexual forms it takes. The preemptive violence of the state against a suspect can thus be folded into a narrative in which it is the respectable citizens of the country who need to be protected from criminal sexual deviants; in fact within this logic, even the alleged rape of Harding proves that he is not a real or manly man. This fits into a broader narrative of homophobia/transphobia, as illustrated by a letter that appeared in another newspaper, the *Guyana Times*:

A very interesting fact which this media house left out of the equation in its analysis is the fact that an organisation protested on behalf of Harding. It is a well-established fact that this group never protests on behalf of anyone unless that person is part of the lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender (LGBT) community.¹⁴

One wonders why the involvement of an LGBT organization should be considered an interesting, indeed relevant fact. What does Colwyn Harding's sexuality have to do with his claims of sexual assault? Bringing to mind the way that female rape survivors have to contend with discussions of their sexual history (the survivor shaming and blaming tactics that constitute a further act of violence), what appear to be at stake here are underlying notions of (hetero)sexual respectability, policing the boundaries not only of who is a deserving victim, but who can even make the claim to have suffered a vicious sexual assault. Put simply, implicit in the letter is the suggestion that Harding's supposed (homo)sexuality disqualifies him from any claim of sexual abuse; his is an *unrapeable* body.

Unlike Jamaica, where it was estimated that there was an extra-judicial killing by the police for each day of the first two weeks of 2014, Guyana has no organizations that address state violence like Jamaicans for Justice, the Peace Management Initiative or Families Against State Terrorism. It is a country that some see as hopelessly divided along racialised and party lines, and where the simplest of matters is easily hijacked to partisan ends, hampering broad-based organising around a variety of issues. Other efforts to publicly challenge police brutality in recent years have for the most part been initiated by political parties (such as the joint opposition's release of a dossier documenting police brutality), leading, not surprisingly, to accusations of partisan politicization.¹⁵ Discussions of the racialized character of alleged police assaults (most of the victims of extra-judicial killings have been African-Guyanese males) have also led to the dismissive response that the Opposition is invested in deepening racial antagonisms while ignoring political and other forms of violence in which Indian-Guyanese are targeted. The dangers of leaving it to political parties to take the

lead on these critical questions are highlighted by the May 2014 appeal by David Granger, leader of the People's National Congress (PNC), for all acts of police torture and shooting over the last seven years to be investigated, as if there could be no reckoning with the continuities between the current situation and the highly organized and repressive security apparatus that existed when the PNC was in power (1968-1992).¹⁶

Against this backdrop, the determination from so many quarters to keep the Harding case in the public eye is a tentative start. It has prompted outrage and statements from individuals as well as the Guyana Human Rights Association, the Bar Association, the Private Sector Commission, women's and anti-violence organizations (Red Thread, Help and Shelter), sexuality rights organizations (Society Against all Forms of Sexual Orientation Discrimination, SASOD) and labour organizations (Guyana Trades Union Congress). It also led to the formation of the Colwyn Harding Support Group, which has affirmed its commitment to "advocate, demand and fight for full justice for Colwyn Harding and other victims of police brutality."¹⁷ Members of the group have accompanied Harding as well as the two other young women arrested that night to court, organized pickets and vigils, and monitored and spoken out against the preferential treatment that seems to be afforded the two officers recently charged with assault.

These concerted efforts to speak out cannot be discounted from the eventual decision to take some kind of legal and disciplinary action – even if belated and partial – against members of the police force. They underline the importance of community mobilization and vigilance in establishing public confidence in and ensuring accountability from the state and its security apparatus. Moreover, it is through collective and reflective deliberation that we might hope to address the "exceptional violence" that is constitutive of state-society relations in the Caribbean (Thomas 2011), in which the contemporary modalities of state power across the region bear the unmistakable imprint of

colonial policing, and where the rule of law more often serves to secure the interests of the powerful.

The broad-based response following the January 10th newspaper report, and particularly the visible role of sexuality, women's and anti-violence organizations, offers perhaps the greatest hope that public conversations will not tiptoe around or gloss over the specifically *sexual* violence that Colwyn Harding allegedly suffered at the hands of the police and the epistemic violence contained in the official responses to the assault. To mark the March 24th International Day for the Right to the Truth Surrounding Gross Human Rights Violations and for the Dignity of Victims, The Colwyn Harding Support Group, Red Thread, SASOD and Help and Shelter hosted a public forum on the use of sexual violence in gross human rights violations, noting that

With more frequent allegations being made against the police for utilising forms of sexual violence as a means of torture to interrogate those in their custody, over 570 cases of child sexual abuse being reported to the Childcare and Protection Agency in 2013, and with a prosecution rate of about one per cent for rape cases in Guyana, the collaborating human rights groups have taken note of how sexual violence is destroying society and are determined to work towards securing justice for victims who suffer in silence because of Guyana's flourishing rape culture.¹⁸

Making these connections is an urgent necessity; at stake are deeply historical and embedded ideas of Caribbean personhood, ideas that govern how we live our lives, and that sanction, through the routinization and normalization of violence, the policing of the boundaries of acceptability/respectability, placing profound limits on what it means to be human today.

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- ¹ This is a revised version of a newspaper column I wrote, "Public Confidence, Public Accountability and the Police," *Stabroek Daily News*, February 3rd, 2014
- ² 'Man alleges police brutality, sodomy,' *Kaieteur News*, January 10, 2014
- ³ Teneisha Evans was released on bail but was later apprehended for allegedly stealing from a relative in an attempt to find the funds to bail Harding. After the story became public, monies were raised to bail Tiffany Edwards. Thanks to the Society Against Sexual Orientation Discrimination (SASOD) for helping to piece together the narrative and supplying an exhaustive inventory of press coverage of the case.
- ⁴ 'News reports increase urgency of needed reforms in Guyana police force,' Guyana Human Rights Association Press Release, January 18, 2014
- ⁵ 'Government rules out voluntary compensation to baton-sodomized man,' *Demerara Waves*, January 16th, 2014
- ⁶ See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TPgCowJDIF0> (accessed August 21, 2014)
- ⁷ 'Open and shut case,' *Stabroek Daily News*, May 8th, 2014
- ⁸ 'Absent Home Affairs official delays 2012 Police Complaints Authority report' *Kaieteur News*, March 3rd, 2014
- ⁹ "There is deep concern about the Colwyn Harding case," Letter to the Editor, *Stabroek Daily News*, June 19, 2014
- ¹⁰ 'Sexual Offences Act still to be fully implemented,' *Stabroek Daily News*, April 27, 2014
- ¹¹ The charge of assault would appear to be consistent with the recommendation of retired justice Kennard, head of the Police Complaints Authority, who according to the media suggested that "there was nothing in the file to indicate that Harding had been baton-raped." GPH doctors, in their unauthorized discussion of the medical records, claimed that they had not looked for evidence of sexual assault as they had not been directed – presumably by the prison guards or the victim – to do so. In one news report, Colwyn Harding spoke of prison officials laughing when he first attempted to tell them that he had been sodomized, and of being embarrassed to disclose the assault to the doctors. See 'Colwyn Harding alleged baton assault...Witness claims he was offered \$\$\$ to change his story,' *Kaieteur News*, February 19, 2014; 'Colwyn Harding says he was embarrassed to tell doctors he was sodomized,' *iNews*, January 17, 2014; 'Doctors never offered me a diagnosis, Harding says,' *Stabroek Daily News*, January 19, 2014.
- It is not clear whether the independent medical reports done in Guyana and Jamaica were included or asked for, even though there appear to be several instances in which the police were asked to supply further information. 'See 'Criminal charges to be recommended against two cops in Colwyn Harding case – Kennard,' *Stabroek Daily News*, May 22, 2014
- ¹² 'Denied access to the exchequer, Opposition still tries to rob treasury of millions,' Editorial page, *Guyana Chronicle*, February 15, 2014
- ¹³ For a discussion of the Guyana Chronicle's persistent stereotyping of African-Guyanese as deviant, violent, criminal and racist in relation to Indian-Guyanese, see 'We should not be silent: Speaking out against the July 2 Guyana Chronicle Editorial,' *Stabroek News*, In the Diaspora column, July 10, 2012
- ¹⁴ 'Much more about the Colwyn Harding matter,' Letter to the Editor, *Guyana Times*, March 12, 2014

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- ¹⁵ For the dossier, see <http://www.guyanapnc.org/MediaCentre/PressRelease/DOSSIER%20TORTURE%20IN%20GUYANA.pdf>, accessed August 20, 2014. **WARNING:** it contains a graphic image of police torture in the prefatory note on page ii).
- ¹⁶ A motion was brought before parliament that was passed, without support from the government. See 'House approves motion for police torture inquiry,' *Stabroek Daily News*, May 22nd, 2014.
- ¹⁷ 'There is deep concern about the Colwyn Harding case'
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Masculinity Studies Yesteryear; Masculinity Studies Today: Tyrone Ali in Conversation with Professor Rhoda Reddock

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In 1996, The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus, and its Caribbean crucible saw the formal recognition of Caribbean scholarship in masculinity studies in the first ever symposium, aptly entitled, "The Construction of Caribbean Masculinity: Towards a Research Agenda." Rhoda Reddock, Professor of Gender, Social Change and Development, birthed and spearheaded this seminal event. Almost twenty years later today, Tyrone Ali, Institute for Gender and Development Studies Ph.D. Candidate in Interdisciplinary Gender Studies, interviews Professor Reddock and examines the philosophy, goal and retrospection of this scholar-activist in the realm of Masculinity Studies as it impacts on Caribbean states and development.

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Professor Reddock, you have been a champion and strong advocate for masculinity studies/men's studies as a relatively new paradigm in the Caribbean. Why is such a stance deemed important by you?

Gender scholars, academics, activists and practitioners are often erroneously seen as having an interest only in women's issues. Once a person thinks about femininity, one has to think of masculinity as the two are constructed in opposition to each other. The reality is that when it comes to the transformation of women's position in society, gender analysis and action towards gender equity and social justice is necessary. To effect this, I felt that the then Centre for (now Institute of) Gender and Development Studies (IGDS) should take leadership in this discourse and not leave it to be steered by persons who were not deeply interested in the larger issues of gender equality and social transformation. I see our work in masculinity studies as very instrumental in this regard.

2. In 1996, the first ever men's studies conference, "The Construction of Caribbean Masculinity: Towards a Research Agenda" was held at St. Augustine. Tell us why you felt the need for such a symposium then.

There were many reasons that pointed to a growing need to focus on masculinity studies. The male marginalisation debate brought the issue into sharp focus and served as an impetus for a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of men as gendered beings. It became clear to me and others that this should not be the only issue or debate that should emerge in masculinity studies. I wanted to see masculinity studies in the region to emerge as part of a larger body of gendered scholarship.

An earlier discussion on male marginality had a history in this region beginning in the 1950s. It was related to men's role in the Afro-Caribbean family and it generated much discussion among British and North American social

scientists and policy makers. By the late 1950s and 1960s, Caribbean researchers, academics and practitioners had stepped into the fray to contextualize the issue within the history and context of this region.

Years later, in the 1980s, we see the emergence of this new discourse on male marginalisation led by Errol Miller that focussed on education. Important additions to this new body of work were made by Caribbean researchers like Barry Chevannes and Janet Brown, for example, whose pioneering research in three Caribbean territories – Jamaica, Dominica and Guyana, resulted in the book – *Learning to be a Man*. Barry was also important as a founding father so to speak of the nascent men's movement in the region. His founding of Fathers Incorporated in Jamaica added a new dimension to the emerging focus on men's studies in a real and dynamic manner. Interestingly, Barry Chevannes identified as one of his reasons for the formation of Fathers Inc. the desire to respond to the feminist critique of men as being irresponsible. I have always felt that this was a misdirected assertion as I have never come across any statement made by Caribbean feminists to this effect. Much of this discussion on 'male irresponsibility' could be found in the earlier writings of the male marginality discussion. Caribbean feminist scholars would not normally adopt such a position but rather interrogate the underlying factors. I felt there was the need to develop a full body of knowledge on men and masculinities to help society understand this complex situation and guide public policy and social and gender interactions.

By the 1990s, there was the beginning of a related discourse and praxis as small men's groups were emerging. For example, in Trinidad and Tobago there was the group, Men Against Violence Against Women (MAVAW) and the small campus-based men's group formed of UWI students who had attended gender courses – ARTOM – The Association for the Transformation and Re-orientation of Masculinity engineered by Jerome Teelucksingh but also including Tracy Hackshaw and Jacqueline Burgess¹. Jerome would go on to declare the first International Men's Day on November 19, 1996 and this has been accepted

internationally. MAVAW and ARTOM were both included on the steering committee that planned that 1996 conference. The conference was therefore the culmination of a range of societal processes and interests and involved several renowned local, regional and international scholars.

3. A focus on masculinity studies then and a conference to interrogate the issue would have been very novel back then and may have raised an eyebrow or two. Was there any fall-out as a result?

Initially, there was the need to really sell the idea to some decision-makers as they saw it as an incredulous idea. After all, a focus on men's studies was not yet established and in some quarters many may not have associated it with the CGDS. But that was soon achieved. There may have been some questions from some individuals but the decision and the aftermath of the conference proved timely and very popular. Many participants expressed their pride and feelings of accomplishment to have been associated with the historic event.

4. Let's focus on the bit about "a research agenda." At that time, or even before, were there other agendas, perhaps particular feminist or political agendas, which led the Symposium Committee to identify its thrust as a research agenda?

No, because it was new. This new paradigm emerged as a result of ongoing research of scholars working in a broad range of areas, for example Calypso, sport, history, sexual behaviours, literature etc. It also emerged from questions that arose in the work of women's and gender studies scholars and the emergence of themes that focussed specifically on masculinity such as educational performance. It was an opportunity for persons to showcase their research in the field and to look at their data with new lenses so it presented a platform upon which to build a new research agenda. It also ensured that a

baseline was created for us to determine where we were and to use this baseline as a benchmark in moving forward.

5. What was the gender landscape like back then (19 years ago) in terms of gender awareness, gender relations, governmental policy and praxis related to gender, etc.?

It was a time when the Women's Movement was very strong; it is now less so although I am seeing some hopeful signs. Back then there was far more open, critical discourse. Locally, there was the relatively new Gender Affairs Division of the Ministry of Social Services - that was a new phenomenon that really set about trying to achieve its mandate. Internationally, the previous year 1995, saw the Global Women's Conference in Beijing with an international call for improvement and articulation of women's rights and gender issues. In fact, that conference marked a high point for the Caribbean women's movement and the Caribbean delegation made important contributions to the shaping the Beijing Platform for Action. At that time also the then CGDS at St. Augustine was just two years old. There was one established academic staff member – me - but I drew on a range of support from affiliate staff from other faculties, students and the small staff of the Centre at that time.

6. And the gender landscape now...?

It seems that globally today there is less critical interrogation of these issues and more conservative positions predominate. In the late 1990s and early 21st Century many Caribbean activists moved on to occupy leadership positions in international and regional organisations and agencies and there has not been the proverbial seamless filling of their shoes. There has not been a generational transfer, but I am beginning to see the emergence of some new

initiatives among a new generation, regionally using social media but also locally using popular actions, so there is a new hope.

We have also been confronted with a shift in politics, a reduction in the state machinery's role and with local and regional gender institutions and groups receiving less funding for a prominent focus on gender. Now, in the context of the rise in fundamentalisms of varying kinds, including religious and economic fundamentalisms, that have occupied the focus and purse strings regionally and internationally; there has also been the emergence of identity-based politics with sometimes negative fallout for women. Importantly though, issues of sexuality, sex-gender identity and diversity, sexual orientation, etc., have increased in importance and are being incorporated into gender analysis and gender studies, and not understood as outside of gender.

The IGDS St. Augustine and regionally is now of course stronger with more staff. I am proud of what we have achieved generally and in the area of scholarship on masculinities. Masculinity studies courses are taught on each of our campuses and continues to be a theme in our research programmes.

7. Given your work towards that Conference in 1996, and based on what you perceive gender relations to be today, if you were given an opportunity to return to that period in planning for the Conference, what would you change or perhaps focus less on and/or more heavily on?

Off the bat, I will say that I would retain what the elemental issues were in that conference since they were very comprehensive and all-encompassing and engaged the discourse then.

8. Tell me then, how do you see masculinity studies and its impact on academia, the general society and gender relations today?

Personally, I am not too heartened at the outcome. I expected a greater impact on these life issues. I think that there should be social workers trained in the area of gender and masculinity studies since I retain the perspective and philosophy that 'gender' is of paramount importance in one's identity, structures of family/household and domestic organisation e.g. child socialisation; it is also important for us to move towards a life free from violence and other aspects of societal development today. I am saddened for example, that students in the B.Ed programme - teachers no longer have to take the course "Men and Masculinities in the Caribbean" which I felt was extremely useful and empowering to them. Those students are the decision-makers in schools and the ones who are expected to implement the curriculum. They are poised to effect positive change and their capacity to act as agents of change has been reduced. Maybe there is the need to do some evaluation of the impact and reach of that course to determine its impact on wider society. Even outreach in communities and the wider society has diminished. What is evident is a cultural resistance to challenging the status quo on sex and gender issues in society, especially in light of a powerful sexist and homophobic popular culture. There also needs to be a more general discussion on how boys become men through the gender socialization process which occurs in many different locations.

9. Now, popular culture and other male gender socializing agents have been paramount in shaping young men and even young women into the persons they are. There seems to be a clarion call in all quarters – religion, the education system, the average Jane on the street, the political sphere, the legal fraternity – about the direction in which society is heading. It is almost a devolution of sorts. Would you consider the perspective that gender has failed us as a society? And if not, how has gender actually helped in any way, given the reality of what is happening everywhere?

There is constant resistance to transformations in gender relations as patriarchy continues to assert its position and adjusts to retain its position in

different ways. Coupled with this is a seemingly less impactful Women's Movement across the Caribbean. The grassroots women's movement has been severely challenged but at the same time we are seeing the emergence of new men's organisations and a regional network, the Caribbean Men's Action Network CARIMan. There is the recognition among some men of the need for a more informed position regarding men's issues and gender equality. There is also the recognition of the need for gendered scholarship on masculinities as a field that is critically important for societal change. Another important development has been the movement for equality in relation to gender identity and sexual orientation. This is a growing regional movement which has been primarily male-led although with some women activists and organisations. Organisations such as the Jamaican Forum for Lesbians and Gays (J-FLAG) and the Coalition Advocating for the Inclusion of Sexual Orientation (CAISO) are important examples and have often found common cause with the women's movement.

Unfortunately there are also some men's organisations that are decidedly anti-feminist and in some ways even see the gains women have made as threatening. Through their activism there has been some de-legitimisation of the regional women's movement which is unfortunate. I feel strongly that gender analysis has much to offer both women and men in understanding the complexities of our existence and new ways forward for the future.

10. There has been a criticism that in a plural society that is Trinidad and Tobago, there is little coverage by academics and researchers on the Indian male's sensibility, replete with his history, culture, differences in social class, religion and his interface with his Afro-Caribbean brother. If this is so, why is there almost an invisibility of the Indian male and his struggles, triumphs and challenges in Men's Studies?

I ask myself the same question! From time to time there has been a published article stemming out of research in Indian masculinities; however the

literature is still quite limited in comparison with the literature on Indo-Caribbean women. For example, I wrote a paper that will soon be published in *Caribbean Quarterly* called "Looking for an Indian Man: Popular Culture and the Dilemmas of Indo-Caribbean Masculinity" and the peer reviewers questioned the absence of literature on Indian masculinities. It's just the reality out there that there are so few research undertakings in the area. We need to work on changing this.

11. But why is Masculinity Studies in the Caribbean seen as Afro-Caribbean Men's Studies?

It shouldn't be at all. I think it's seen as such – incorrectly so – because Indo-Caribbean scholars have not been interrogating Indian masculinities in the same ways as Afro-Caribbean scholars have. Indo-Caribbean women have been writing a great deal in fiction and feminist scholarship but less feminist-related research on Indo-Caribbean masculinities. I have found though that in the interrogation of their fiction we may be able to discern much in that regard. When I first introduced the course on Men and Masculinities at St. Augustine, I included a module on Caribbean literature that you taught, Tyrone, and I was amazed at the good job that male Caribbean authors had done in capturing the situation of Indo-Caribbean men and gender relations more generally. Another possible reason is that Indian masculinities have not usually been perceived as pathological in the same way that Afro-Caribbean masculinities have. The early male marginality discussions are a good example of this. The truth is that all masculinities, just as all femininities, need to be interrogated, researched, analysed and understood if this project of social justice and gender transformation is to take place. Masculinity scholars need to pick up the mantle here. At the same time, we need to remember that the scholarship on Caribbean masculinities generally is itself still growing.

12. What has been the Women's Movement response to Men's Studies in the Caribbean over the last 18 years since the IGDS' Symposium on Men's Studies?

Very accepting indeed; perhaps this is because we conceptualise related issues in every aspect of our lives. The IGDS incorporates masculinity studies in its curriculum planning and course delivery on all campuses and there has been exponential growth and resultant interest, both among male and female students. The Women's Movement across the Caribbean sees masculinity studies as having a pivotal and sustained role in its quest to attain gender quality and social justice and recognises the importance of partnerships with men's organisations with similar objectives.

13. How has your work, not just before and at the Symposium, but your continued work on masculinity studies impacted on the Men's Movement/Men's Studies globally?

I would want to think in a very positive and real manner. I know my text that emerged out of the conference, *Interrogating Caribbean Masculinities: Theoretical and Empirical Analyses* is used internationally and it also earned the best-selling textbook award from the UWI Press in 2004 reflecting its popularity and relevance. It is no secret as well that the Caribbean remains at the cutting edge of work on masculinity studies and scholarship globally and so my focus is ever present in that area. In fact, a number of research issues involving masculinity that are now being undertaken internationally have been explored already to certain degrees right here in the Caribbean. In particular I can think of all the work on male academic performance carried out in this region over the past fifteen years. I attended an international conference recently and they were just beginning to look seriously at these issues in Europe and we have a longer record of this. Unfortunately, there is little international recognition of our scholarship. We need to do more to be visible internationally e.g. publishing in international journals, collaborating with international scholars in areas where

we have expertise. We integrate masculinity studies within our theorizing on gender in a way that is not done in many places. I see our role in this regard as vital especially since scholarship coming out of the Global North often marginalizes and ignores the theorizing from the Global South.

14. Give me a statement on the state of men's studies as you see it today.

Men's Studies, or Masculinity Studies as I prefer to call it, is a growing field. It is vibrant globally and carries with it its own repertoire of research interests, related publications, internationally acceptable peer-reviewed journals and global conferences. Men's Studies is also a diverse field with a range of different approaches and in some instances it is linked to a wider men's movement. At the IGDS and The UWI, I believe that significant inroads have been made in this area. It is my hope that exposure to masculinity studies through reading our publications or attending our classes can allow men to interrogate what it means to be a man in the same way that women's studies has, for the last four decades, been interrogating the construction of femininity and what it means to be a woman.

15. Finally, if you were to be engaged in a second Masculinity Studies symposium in 2016 – twenty years after the initial one – what would be some of the considerations you will bring to the fore to ensure not only a successful symposium but also a solid path for this area over the next 10 years?

There must be concentrated reflection on the aims, lessons and direction of men's studies as it has developed over the last ten years. The gains and losses must be assessed in order to determine where we must go. Although the last conference was extremely comprehensive, there are some issues that must certainly be addressed if one were to be held today. First we would need to examine in a much deeper way, issues of sexual orientation, sex/gender identity

and gender diversity as these are now firmly on the Caribbean agenda. Additionally, the issue of masculinity and political and ethnic/religious identity in conflict situations would be important especially in the context of the ethnic and religious-based global conflicts over the past decade. We would have to return to continuing concerns such as male youth criminality, violence, men, work and the sexual division of labour as well as the continuing challenge of educational participation and achievement.

I think it may also be useful to include some workshops for parents, teachers, social workers, police officers, judicial officers etc., on issues of gender and masculinity, I really feel that such knowledge would do much to educate but also empower and liberate us from many of the harmful ideologies that are really negatively affecting our societies today.

A second symposium will be everyone's symposium because Men's/Masculinity Studies is everyone's affair and a generation that may have missed it would certainly benefit!

¹ Interestingly this early men's organization included at least one woman.



No Empathy

[Nicholas Gilbert](#)

Prison Welfare Officer
Ministry of National Security, Trinidad and Tobago

No Empathy

Nobody's hearing my cry as I sit down on the streets begging,
Some passing, some looking, some judging,
While others thinking that I am a waste of time,
But nobody feels a beggar's pain.

When you look on the streets so many men dying
By the hands of other men,
Mouths shot and fingers clasp,
Nobody cooperating with state police while
The jail keeps filling...mass overcrowding.
Heterosexuals searching for ah 'good man'
But men dying or in the jail rotting,
While society renaming with derogatory labels,
But nobody understands what's happening.
No one feels men's pain.

How to cite

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A woman raped, hurt and abused as a child and
Ends up married to a coward 'Woman beater',
A defaulted creature, who thinks women are drums
So that he could beat and parade the streets
Boasting of his "skills" while
She is in pain crying but people saying that
"That is husband and wife business,"
She is bleeding and people laughing
Now her own flesh and blood she's abusing
And villagers casting blame on her,
But nobody cares,
Nobody feels a woman's pain

A young boy with dreams of being a doctor,
But ends up a murderer,
While people saying "Hang him!"
But nobody knows his pain.
His mother a sphincter, his father a magician, like Mumford
From Sesame Street, a puff of smoke and he vanished forever,
Now the 'youth man' turned to the gang leader,
To get a dollar, because there was no other to mentor him.
When he tried to get out of crime he was faced with a gun
So he turn the gun around so that the gang leader
Who was standing threatening,
Is now lying so peacefully sleeping.
The boy was seeking liberation
But is now imprisoned for life
And no body feeling his pain
They shouting, "Hang Him!"

Rise Up Men!

A woman seems to have limited choices,
So confused when it's time to choose,
A man in today's society;
So brittle is our masculinity,
That there is no steady picture of manhood,
Since it changes every day like linens.
What we expect women to say?
When we leave her impaired and stuffed in confusion,
"Where are the good men?"

But we, men too,
Are too confused and lock ourselves into pigeon holes,
That we emasculate ourselves into shelves,
A victim of masculinism,
Blaming everyone except MAN,
Becoming a victim of male hegemony,
An outcast of male hierarchy,
Saying, "At least I'm more man than him."

Then we run,
Run away abandoning her,
Leaving her injured,
And a victim of our masculine identity crisis.
She can only say it as she sees it!

Stand up men!
And re-write the script,
For the gendered stage,
You perform your masculinity on,
By throwing away the armour of male-insecurity,
So that women would see that manhood is
Built on pilasters of love, respect and responsibility

Then, maybe then,
She would smile and say,
Alas! Good men.

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Father

F or all the times you were there for me,
A nd mummy and my brothers and sisters too.
T he sacrifices you made were gifts from your
H eart as you left yourself undone to
E nsure that all our needs were met.
R esponsibility not mere biology is how you defined fatherhood.

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ABC

A ll the time I answered you
B ut you ignored me and
C ontinuously complained to your girlfriends
D estroying my manhood leaving me
E masculated but I still begged for your
F orgiveness to no avail I became frustrated asking
G od to give the strength to love you
H ow he loves me...unconditionally...
I talked...you nagged but still your
K inship through marriage was all I
L onged for and wanted you to be
M ines and for your ears to connect to my
N etwork so you will be connected
O nly to me Like TSTT hearing clearly and forgetting what distorted
P eople say or people think since you are my
Q ueen...oh I wish you would be...
R emember the day we met...
S tare only at the positives and listen to
T he sweet tunes of our friendship so you will
U ncover deeply in your heart that you
V ehemently love me...obey your
W ishes to come back to me...
'X' we shall no longer be but
Y ou will be mines and I yours for a
Z illion years.

The voice

I am the voice of the my community, my people,
the voice of the world
crying out for social justice,
crying out for the voiceless,
the poor, weak, and fearful and stressed.
But each time you hear me, you
personalize me, without even taking time to know me,
I am the small man who sits in pain
ignorant that he has a voice
to cry out against poverty

so like a bad dream he sits with all his strength
and shouts but no sound
just mere whispers.
No one takes whispers seriously
since the city is filled with traffic,
of shoppers spending all they got;
who have time to listen to a penniless
who whispers.

I am the voice crying in the cities
Hear the whispers of the poor...hear it now!

I am the women beaten, battered and abused
thinking that he beats her because he loves her
and she needs to submit to his rage,
be the humble vent valve so that he
does not wage on society but only her....thinking,
She's the social control on violence and crime
Better he projects on her his stresses
And neglects her humanity.

I am the voice crying in the cities
Hear the whispers of abused women...hear it now!

I am the man mistreated since a child
now by his wife but filled with fear of
being labelled a "girl" so he takes the cruelty,
physical and psychological, silently
with the neighbours hearing derogating verbalism
and laughing...like it is comedy fest
I am the voice crying in the cities
Hear the whispers of abused men...hear it now
I am the little girl raped but interrogated
so much that she becomes intimidated,
Moving her status from victim to perpetrator;
"She look for that!"
"Why she pants was so tight?"
"Why she was out so late at night?"

I am the voice crying in the cities
Hear the whispers of raped women...hear it now!

I am...who I am...
And if I remain bridled then
I would cease to be who I am;
So to all those who brand me
Like rejected goods to be dumped,
Personalizing my tongue...my pen.
You are driven by your ignorant fears,
But I will make you ride your fears like a surfer
Rides waves, so you would listen to my voice.

I am the voice crying in the cities
I turn your whispers into shouts
I am the loud speaker of the weak...hear them now!