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To Mahsa Amini and hundreds of Iranian women whose pain and suffering inspired me to take a step back and acknowledge my own. To my adviser, Dr. Shelene Gomes, whose patience and dedication encouraged me to keep going. And to my colleagues, who spent hours of phone calls, lending me support while I wrote. Thank you.

ABSTRACT

This study examines the relationship between rape culture and female bodily autonomy in Jamaica and Trinidad. Rape culture is extensive across all aspects of life and impacts women's bodily autonomy. It explores the culture of both islands through soca and dancehall lyrics and their portrayal of women through the male gaze. The study also examines the public's reaction to the enforcement of sexual harassment laws during Carnival, a significant element of Caribbean culture. Homophobia and heterosexism are explored in relation to rape culture and its impact on female bodily autonomy. Although Trinidad and Tobago possess laws to combat rape culture, there is a socio-educational disparity that does not allow for the proper enforcement of these laws. Additionally, there are abortion laws that provide minimal protection for female bodily autonomy. These laws give women a recourse in possibly reclaiming what may have been stolen from them, but the disconnect between the laws and their enforcement remains a challenge.

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Rationale

To examine the concept of female bodily autonomy and rape culture with an aim to highlight the importance of these issues and effect positive change within the West Indian context.

Thesis Statement

While there has been progress toward gender equality in the Caribbean, it can be debated that rape culture remains prevalent socially, politically, and culturally in the Caribbean society thereby affecting female bodily autonomy.

Parameters

This study is limited in terms of geography and themes. The study is focused on the English-speaking Caribbean, specifically on the islands of Jamaica and Trinidad. Thematically, I focus on socio-political factors at the core of rape culture. Although the core of this study is women, homophobia against queer men is explored as a symptom of the structural discrimination within which rape culture is situated.

Objectives

The first goal of this study is to identify the relationship between rape culture and female bodily autonomy in the Caribbean. The second objective is to examine how socio-political structures and industries perpetuate rape culture. The impact of rape culture on women's bodily autonomy will then be assessed. Another objective is to summarize the recent literature on rape culture with a view to identifying successful initiatives toward achieving gender equality and inclusive societies.

Methodology

This is a qualitative socio-cultural study. The sources used consist of secondary sources such as scholarly journals, song lyrics and newspaper reports.

Chapter Outlines

This study consists of four chapters. Chapter One, Defining and Contextualizing Terms, provides the foundation of the study by presenting key terms. Chapter Two, Culture: Art and Media, addresses art, media, and carnival influence rape culture. The third chapter, called Gendered Expectations, explores homophobia as a product of toxic masculinity. Chapter Four, Female Bodily Autonomy in Trinidad and Tobago's Legal System, assesses policies which have improved to protect sexual assault victims, but still do not provide safety to a wider extent as these policies should.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature examined throughout this study includes topics such as rape culture, intimate partner violence, gender-based violence, homophobia, heterosexism and female bodily autonomy.

"An Empirical Exploration Into the Measurement of Rape Culture" by N. Johnson and D. Johnson investigated the understanding of rape culture through the demonstration of empirical support for the proposed model of rape culture. This model is comprised of factors like traditional gender roles, sexism, hostility toward women, adversarial sexual beliefs, and the acceptance of violence. The study highlights the need for further research to build a reliable model of rape culture. While the authors did not explore these elements of the model from the lens of queer women of colour, this perspective is explored in "Intimate Partner Violence in LBTQ Relationships in Jamaica" by Jennan P. Andrew.

In this thesis, Andrew addresses how intimate partner violence is perceived by the LBTQ community in Jamaica along with the main factors which contribute to intimate partner violence in LBTQ relationships. Some common causal factors include dependence and substance abuse, but other factors are unique to LBTQ relationships such as the fear of being "outed" when seeking support. This study does not focus on the perspective of non-LBTQ individuals on intimate partner violence. However, research done by Debra Joseph and Adele Jones entitled, "Understanding Violence Against Women in the Caribbean Through an Exploration of Men's Perspectives," fills this gap.

Joseph and Jones' study was a qualitative one, with 60 men participating, between the ages of 16-80 in Barbados and Grenada. The aim of this research was to explore the male perspective on domestic violence. In their findings, aggression was considered by three-quarters of the participants to be a "natural" trait which was generally kept under control. However, stress-induced triggers such as unemployment and poverty, as well as psychological responses to insecurity and jealousy were deemed to be the cause of a man losing control and becoming violent. There is a lack of exploration of the factors which enable men to cease violent behaviours even if they been socialised in a culture where domestic violence is normalised.

The article by Frida Lyonga entitled "Shades of Homophobia: A Framework for Analysing Negative Attitudes Toward Homosexuality," reviews the differing meanings of the term homophobia in academic literature. Lyonga synthesizes these positions into a framework to analyse the vast facets of homophobia in particular contexts. The framework organizes the negative attitudes toward LGBTQ people into seven separate but interrelated shades of homophobia: veiled, tepid, radical, prohibitionist, denialist, avoidance and morbidity. These shades clarify the diverse categories of discrimination of homosexual people and provide a structured lens which researchers can utilize in their qualitative research. This paper does not focus on a particular culture and provides a broad overview of homophobic behaviours. However, "When the Closet is a Region: Homophobia, Heterosexism and Nationalism in the Commonwealth Caribbean" by Tara Atluri explores homophobia within the West Indian context.

Atluri delves into the complexity of homophobia, heterosexism and sexism in Jamaica. She theorises a relationship between homophobia and sexism, where the Caribbean has a set of expectations regarding masculinity and femininity in which women (expected to be feminine) are subordinate to men (expected to be masculine) and homosexuality crosses these expectations. People who identify or are identified as homosexual are not only excluded but sometimes violently persecuted as well. Atluri explores heterosexist and homophobic rhetoric by examining dancehall songs which at times have homophobia lyrics and overtly encourage homophobic attitudes and behaviours. This study also discusses homophobia and heterosexism within religion. Part of Alturi's discovery was that sexism, heterosexism and homophobia had a relationship of mutual dependence.

The research conducted by Martin et al, "Knowledge and Perception of Abortion and the Abortion Law in Trinidad and Tobago," analyses the findings of their survey regarding the views on abortion and the knowledge of the country's abortion law. Interviews of 1,078 selected households were executed. More than half of the respondents did not possess accurate knowledge on the current abortion laws due to the lack of education. The majority supported the reform of the law, mostly on the grounds that the abortion was required to save the woman's life. It is noteworthy and intriguing that the citizens are supportive of change in the law and lean toward a partial pro-choice stance on the topic.

The above studies are the main references of this thesis. Their research is integral to my own in which I hope to lend insight into the Trinidadian experience of rape culture.

CHAPTER ONE
Defining and Contextualizing Terms

This chapter focuses on defining and contextualising the key terms of the study. These terms include: rape culture, sexism, female bodily autonomy, homophobia, heterosexism, intimate partner violence as well as gender-based violence.

Rape culture. Rape culture may be defined as a theoretical construct which comprises of several rape-supporting attitudes including traditional gender roles, hostility toward women as well as the acceptance of violence (N. Johnson and D. Johnson 71). Traditional gender roles are the expected duties and activities of men and women which stem from the normative expectations. While these expectations differ to a degree across cultures, there are dominant norms that have been institutionalised from Western industrial society centuries ago. For instance, in Western-influenced societies, such traditional gender roles can be seen in the way society constructs men as the primary providers/ earners within nuclear families while women's ideal roles are caretakers of the home, child-bearing and child-rearing.

In these societies, men's work is constructed as productive – earning the money – and women's work as unproductive – focusing on social and biological reproduction. Over the past two centuries in particular, feminists have critiqued this gendered division of labour and its unequal effects on one gender namely, women . While there are cultural factors and sociological classifications that complicate this gender hierarchy, it is evident in present day behaviours. For example, hostility toward women involves the belief that women are manipulative and are undeserving of trust. Within the English-speaking Caribbean region, this can be seen when many young men agree on the phrase, "Gyal is shit." This unfavourable portrayal can lead to the

justification of violence against them. The mindset results in a culture which is not only accepting of violence against women, but also encourages it, thus promoting sexual assault.

Sexism. N. Johnson and D. Johnson define sexism as the stereotyping or discrimination against an individual depending on their gender assigned at birth (73). An instance of this can be observed when one behaves outside of the boundaries of their preconceived traditional gender roles. For example, a man who takes pleasure in painting his nails may be referred to as the male derogatory term for gay, "fag," or in the Caribbean context, "bullerman." This insult, at its core, is a jab toward women as anything remotely feminine is judged negatively.

Sexism can be divided into hostile and benevolent constructs for further examination. Hostile sexism is the overwhelmingly pessimistic views on women compared to men and its relationship with rape and sexual assault (N. Johnson and D. Johnson 74). This concept of sexism values the superiority of men over women, especially in the aftermath of sexual assault. The mindset results in victim blaming as women are deemed to be deserving of the abuse. On the opposing end, benevolent sexism is the noble attitude toward women which places them in a position of fragility where they are in need of male protection. Victimization stemming from benevolent sexism places the blame on women by infantilizing them."

Female bodily autonomy. According to Biswas et al., personal autonomy is an individual's control over their own body and the resources they possess (2). In this context, the term "personal" can be likened with the term "bodily." Personal or bodily autonomy plays a significant role within the power dynamics between male-female relationships in a patriarchal culture. Thus, female bodily autonomy refers to the ability of a woman to not only control her life but as well as her access to resources and capacity to engage in all aspects of her life fairly

with her male equivalent (Biswas et al. 2). A woman's bodily autonomy is strongly associated with her reproductive rights. These legal rights provide her the freedom to make decisions on birthing children, including the number, timing and if she desires to have children at all. However, her decision is often swayed by her husband and his family as a result of male supremacy, a value of hostile sexism. Abortion also falls under the branch of a woman's reproductive rights. Trinidad and Tobago's archaic abortion law replicates Section 58 from the UK 1861 Offences against the Person Act, with a broad ban against abortion.

Homophobia. Lyonga describes homophobia as today's preferred expression for a wide spectrum of negative attitudes toward homosexuality (1665). The ambiguity of the term lends itself to a range of interpretations. Thus, Lyonga proposes a homophobia framework for the adverse behaviours toward gay men and lesbians which consists of seven sectors or "shades": radical, prohibitionist, denialist, avoidance, morbidity, tepid and veiled. These terms will be used in this study. Radical homophobia refers to discrimination that is coupled with violent, physical and extremist actions. Prohibitionist homophobia deals with the regulation, banning or condemnation of homosexuality by institutions, without the use of violence. Denialist homophobia is the refusal to recognize and accept the existence of homosexuality in a given society. The desire to avoid physical interaction with a homosexual person is known as avoidance homophobia while the concept of homosexuality as a disease of some sort is called morbidity homophobia. An individual or culture which is not outright against the practice of homosexuality but disagrees with the granting of rights to homosexuals which are normal for heterosexual people, especially in the case of marriage and adoption, is referred to as tepid homophobia. Furthermore, veiled homophobia relates to the subtle types of prejudices toward

gay men and lesbians and is mainly exhibited in societies where anti- discrimination laws against homophobia exist.

Heterosexism. Heterosexism is the extensive belief that heterosexuality is the sole sexual orientation that is worthy of acknowledgement, discourse and advocacy (Majied 151). This mentality is a form of denialist homophobia which excludes LGBTQ people. Heterosexism has been the dominant cultural paradigm in Trinidad and Tobago, and across the region. It can develop into tepid homophobia, for example, the lack of LGBTQ marriage rights in the Caribbean. Resources such as health care and insurance are difficult to access due discrimination, lack of legal protections and inadequate healthcare infrastructure. As a result of this mindset, homosexual individuals are not acknowledged.

Intimate partner violence. The World Health Organization (2012) (qtd. in Andrew 7), defines Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) as "any type of physical or sexual violence, controlling behaviour or emotional and psychological abuse which takes place between a couple." According to Andrew, IPV can result in many negative consequences including injury, reproductive disorders, chronic health conditions, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and death (7). Although both men and women can be offenders of IPV, women are more often the victims of this form of abuse. IPV impacts persons regardless of their gender, age or sexuality. However, most studies have been centred around heterosexual relationships, a possible result of heterosexism. This creates difficulty in understanding and recognizing IPV in LGBTQ relationships and in turn affects policy making, access to support, willingness of victims to report as well as prevention (Andrew 7).

Gender-based violence. Tsapalas et al. refers to gender-based violence (GBV) as a concern of "epic proportion" which mirrors the disparate power dynamics that stem from the binary gender institution and is often "perpetrated by those with more physical, cultural, or social power and inflicted upon those without," (23). Violence is intimately intertwined with masculinity and is especially exhibited toward women. This creates an imbalanced power dynamic which promotes physical, verbal and psychological abuse. IPV is a subcategory of GBV.

The significance of this chapter is to clearly delineate the concepts that will be discussed throughout the study by defining and contextualizing key terms. This makes it easier to understand the discussions of the following chapters as the terms are used within the above contexts, unless stated otherwise. The next section focuses on the way in which the Caribbean culture promotes rape culture and GBV.

CHAPTER TWO
Culture: Art and Media

This chapter discusses instances of Caribbean culture which overtly encourage or support rape and abuse toward women. In this section, I concentrate on the societies of Jamaica and Trinidad for certain reasons. Jamaica's culture is highly influential, especially through its music which is widespread across the world. Living in Trinidad all my life has allowed me to observe how violence against women and girls is normalised. As a result, Carnival and Caribbean music, mainly soca and dancehall, will be dissected under the lens of rape culture and GBV.

Caribbean music is a celebration of our culture. At the beginning of Nailah Blackman's first music video, "Sokah," a clip plays in which Ras Shorty I explains the reason behind the creation of soca. He said that soca is "a combination of East Indian and African rhythm" and that its purpose in the 1970s was to unite these two groups, creating something uniquely Trinidadian. While its purpose has been achieved each year with new releases, the genre can portray women in an objectified, hypersexualised light.

One instance of this is Farmer Nappy's song, "Hookin Meh," which was released in 2018. The music video begins with the artist surrounded by fellow male musicians working together when he receives a call from his wife who promptly tells him that she has cooked and they "need to talk." Upon hearing that he jokes to his friends that since she has cooked something must be wrong, implying that she only does this when there are difficulties in their relationship. They all laugh, taking part in a joke at the expense of their friend's significant other. This interaction demonstrates the superiority of cultural factors over one's individual beliefs (L. Johnson and D. Johnson 76). Even if one of the men had identified the inappropriateness of the joke, it would have been unlikely that he would have spoken up considering that such a joke is

normalised and supported by his peers. At home, his wife tells him that she can no longer be a part of the relationship. In response, he breaks into song and claims:

I'm not leavin'

That's impossible to do

[Chorus]

Cause if you want me to go

You can't be lookin' de way you do

You can't be cookin de way you do

You can't be hookin meh

The instrumental is upbeat and joyful, however upon closer inspection the lyrics are quite unsettling. He completely dismisses her concerns by saying that he is not leaving their home or ending their relationship. Further context of their relationship is never provided, but the lyrics can be classified as a form of benevolent sexism. The wife should have known better than to be a good caretaker if she wanted to leave the toxic relationship. He places the responsibility of his actions on her shoulders. He cannot leave because she looks too good, reducing her worth to her physical appearance. He cannot leave because her food tastes too good - her personhood is reduced to her acts of service. He restricts her bodily autonomy by assuming control over her life as he ignores her boundaries; she desires to exit a relationship where she no longer feels loved or safe.

Dancehall is another Caribbean musical genre in which female bodily autonomy is consistently disrespected. There exists a connection between sex and violence in which the media portrays aggressive sexual encounters as appealing (N. Johnson and D. Johnson 75). This promotes the idea that women desire rough intercourse and is used to justify rape and violence toward women.

IPV is encouraged in some dancehall songs, for example, “Bedroom Bully” (1992) by Shabba Ranks in which he sings:

> My daddy was a bedroom bully
>
> Bedroom bully for I man mommy
>
> Then daddy bully Shabba Rankin mommy
>
> Then Shabba mommy have a bully baby
>
> And the bully baby God almighty was me
>
> It's me Shabba Rankin, I'm a bedroom bully
>
> I'm a bedroom bully, without mercy
>
> In my bedroom is my territory
>
> Any girl come test they cannot leave me

This song can be interpreted as a glorification of violence against women since the term “bully” has abusive connotations with the intent to harm or scare, especially since the song is accompanied by a woman's painful cries (Atluri 304). The beginning of these lyrics depict marital rape. The artist shares that his father sexually assaulted his mother which resulted in his conception. “Man is the attacker, the sexual initiator, both the ‘bull’ and the ‘bully’, while woman is the passive victim,” (Atluri 305). This heterosexist rhetoric is passed down to Ranks who, instead of using his trauma as an opening for discourse on spousal abuse, advocates for the problematic behaviour. He is now a “bedroom bully” and the bedroom is his territory where any woman who enters is not permitted to leave. The concept of his bedroom being his territory where a woman cannot escape can be likened to a predatory, animalistic mindset where the sexual predator, the man, has power over the woman, the victim. She is being owned and acted upon, stripping her of her bodily autonomy.

Soca and dancehall are listened to year-round, however the music is streamed more often during Trinidad and Tobago's Carnival season, mainly heard over radio stations and large music trucks on the roads. In 2018, the public information officer of the Police Service ASP Michael Jackman announced in a briefing that "Any physical touching where there is no consent with one of the parties involved is in fact unlawful and can be deemed an assault," (La Vende, Trinidad and Tobago News Blog). "Tiefing a wine" was now being acknowledged as sexual assault. There was a myriad of responses to this newfound enforcement of law.

Feminist group Womantra shared a post on "wining etiquette" after a man denied accusations of slapping a woman's buttocks at a fete the weekend before (Loop News). The infographic (Fig. 1) outlines the process of asking a woman for a dance, considering whether the man is familiar with her or not, and the closeness of their acquaintance. While the post gives suggestions on body language which might confirm whether a woman does or does not consent to a "wine" it does not consider verbal consent. According to the Editorial Desk of LIFEINTRINIDAD Marketing Ltd., "Do not leave it up to non-verbal cues. Use your words and make sure the answer is yes." Non-verbal language can result in misunderstandings and uncomfortable situations for both parties. The post received hundreds of shares, and many agreed with Womantra's sentiment. However, several men felt differently.

Soca artist Machel Montano (Fig. 2) voiced his displeasure by saying that "when it comes to wining, it's better to ask forgiveness than permission," (Mendes-Franco). He advised the crowd to ignore the warnings of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS) against non-consensual gyrating. Many men agreed with Montano's notion. This was demonstrated when a video of a female reveller elbowing a man who danced on her without her consent went viral. The women in the comments of the video felt that they should be able to "wine and enjoy

[themselves] without it being taken as an invitation for some random man…" (Loop News). Contrary to this, the men claimed that if women are taking part in the festival, they are obliged to dance with them. One commenter said, "No woman should b wining on any and every stranger, but at d same time u can't get vex if u in d road for carnival, looking damnnnnn good like her and not expect a man to try sum'.... Some women jus inna f**kin bubble!" (Loop News).

The men's responses to the enforcement of a law against sexual assault is riddled with both hostile and benevolent forms of sexism. Some men feel a sense of entitlement to a woman's body during Carnival, objectifying her and placing his value as a person over hers (hostile). On the opposing end, commenters like the one above, place women in an endangering fragility. They blame the woman: the assault is her fault for looking this good and she should expect to be danced on without her consent (benevolent). The idea that a woman shouldn't be "wining on any and every stranger" gives the impression that a woman should not be allowed to want to dance. The concept of her owning her body and deciding what to do with it is almost blasphemous to some Caribbean men. The normalisation of this behaviour results in morbid crimes like the case of Asami Nagakiya, a Japanese musician who was strangled to death February 9th, 2016. Nagakiya's body was discovered under a tree in the Queen's Park Savannah, still dressed in her Legacy Carnival costume (La Vende, Trinidad and Tobago Guardian). Forensic reports confirmed that she had not been sexually assaulted. Her murderer, David Allen, was identified five years later and was deemed to have been killed in a police shooting in December 2016 (La Vende, Trinidad and Tobago Newsday). Nagakiya did not receive the justice she deserved.

This chapter's discussion was centred on the culture of Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica. Specific soca and dancehall song lyrics were examined in order to understand the unfavourable

behaviours and attitudes toward women. These genres are often popularised during Carnival, which saw a cultural shift in 2018 when law enforcement advised revellers to ask for consent to dance. This announcement was met with mixed reactions in which many men opposed due to their sense of entitlement to a woman's body. Chapter three addresses such behaviours as a symptom of heterosexism.

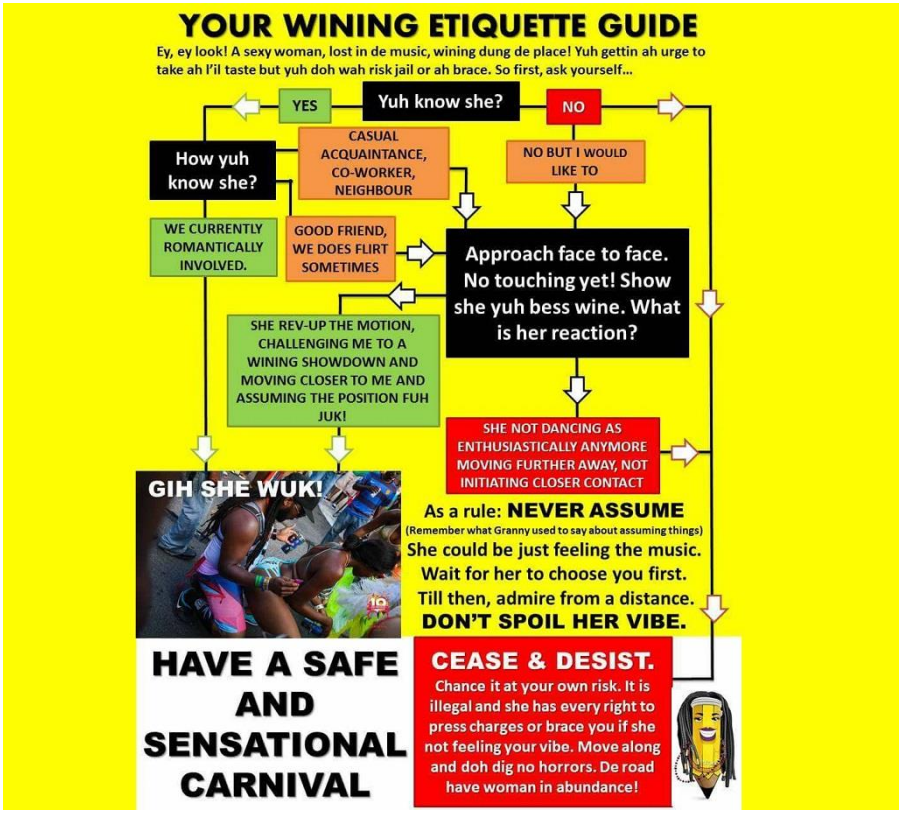

Fig. 1

Your Wining Etiquette Guide: An Infographic by Womantra

Source: Loop News

Fig. 2

Soca star Machel Montano gyrating on a female patron at Red Ants' Stumped fete 2018

Source: Trinidad and Tobago Newsday

CHAPTER THREE
Gendered Expectations

This section deals with the expectations of people within the gender binary and the treatment of those who act outside of the preconceived norms. Most Caribbean men subscribe to a homophobic mindset which leads to violence toward women in an attempt to secure their masculinity. Heterosexism encourages sexual abuse to LBTQ women and can prevent LBTQ women from seeking support in the instance of IPV. This mentality can also result in violence perpetrated by women not being acknowledged as abuse.

Rape culture does not exist in a vacuum, void of any intersectionality. The rape culture of the Commonwealth Caribbean has been influenced by the imperial state or 'mother country.' "Elizabethan statutes of rape legitimised colonial masculinity by placing it outside of the parameters of rape, while black and other 'native' masculinities were criminalised for rape," (Atluri 298). By extension, these laws defined womanhood where the "white Madonna" was untouchable and the "Black whore" was promiscuous, reducing identities into sexed bodies (Atluri 298). Women of colour have been demonised and their bodies subjugated to objectification through the lens of the white male gaze since the age of colonialism. This intersectionality not only includes race, but sexuality as well.

Within the gender binary, men and women are codependent on each other's differences in defining their identities. What is not inherently masculine is feminine, and that which is feminine is of lesser value. Masculinity requires the constant need to be earned. Black masculinity is truly accepted by its colonial counterpart in the sexualization of the female body, a factor that plays into the 'civility' of men (Atluri 299). If a man does not prey on the sexed form of a woman, separating her humanity from her physical being, he is not masculine but rather

feminine. Men who refuse to follow these cultural expectations are subjected to "backlash, and may be deemed "deviant" or "abnormal,"" according to Guy (2006) (qtd. in N. Johnson and D. Johnson 73).

In a study conducted on Caribbean men, Joseph and Jones found that the normative markers of being male are aggression, toughness and controlling behaviours (7). Men are expected to act aggressive and dominant and not treat women as equals. Many boys are taught from childhood to repress their feelings to not be seen as "emotional" which is deemed to be a feminine trait. Men who behave outside of these markers of the heterosexist matrix are called "faggots" and women, "dykes" (Atluri 295). Once again, I look to Caribbean music to witness the extent of the radical homophobic rhetoric. Dancehall artists like Buju Banton, Scare Dem Crew and Shabba Ranks are known for their hate toward homosexuals, encouraging gun violence against them. While homophobia is promoted, sexism is simultaneously reinforced (Atluri 303). Artist Capelton sings, "Woman mi lotion, mi na lotion man," (Atluri 303). This is the objectification of women coupled with homophobia. Another example is Beenie Man's "Weeping and Moaning" where he sings (Atluri 305):

> I rather charge fi' rape Suzanne
>
> More than go a prison
>
> Fi' wine pon Jonathan

In an attempt to secure his heterosexual masculinity and "protect" himself from homosexuality, the artist glorifies sexual violence against women. Male objectification is meant for women alone. As a result, homophobes are uncomfortable with the existence of gay men because they themselves can be potentially subjected to the same objectification and demoralisation that the women undergo.

Men with heterosexist views may promote sexual violence against LBTQ women. This is known as corrective rape: a form of radical homophobia in which LBTQ women are punished because their sexual orientation is perceived as unnatural (Mayeza 2). According to J-FLAG (2015) (referenced in Andrew 40), a survey of 316 LGBTQ Jamaican people found that 18% reported being threatened with sexual violence, with lesbian and bisexual women particularly being at risk of corrective rape. A lesbian participant in the study of Mavhandu-Mudzusi and Ganga-Limando (135), as quoted in Mayeza 2, said that:

> Boys threatened to rape us to make us straight. They said if they find me alone at night, they will gang rape me. They say this will make me a real lady. Some men give comments like we are creating a shortage of females as we are taking their girlfriends.

Corrective rapists are products of heterosexist cultures which encourage the discrimination, marginalisation and sexual victimisation of LBTQ women (Mayeza 3). Corrective rape is used as a heteronormative tool to strip LBTQ women of their bodily autonomy as they live in constant fear. The sexual abuse will turn her into a "real lady"- a marker of true womanhood in a heterosexist society being the desire for male validation and pleasure.

"Silence and shame guard Caribbean homosexuality," Atluri writes (300). It is due to this shame and homophobia that members of the LBTQ community fear being outed. This prevents victims of IPV from seeking support from police authority, health workers, counsellors and family (Andrew 10). Heteronormative gender stereotypes warp the perspective of members of the justice system and cause IPV within LBTQ relationships to be viewed as less serious (Andrew 10). Benevolent sexism results in IPV perpetrated by female-identifying individuals to be invisibilized as the stereotype portrays women as incapable of violence (Andrew 8).

The focus of this chapter was on the gendered norms of the Caribbean and the treatment of those who do not follow them. Rape culture was examined within the intersectionality of homosexuality. LBTQ women are vulnerable to sexual violence due to heterosexist behaviours which can also prevent them from seeking help for violence within their own relationships. Benevolent sexism reduces the gravity of IPV committed by persons identifying as women. Chapter four looks closely at how female bodily autonomy is dealt with in Trinidad and Tobago's legal system.

CHAPTER FOUR

Female Bodily Autonomy in Trinidad and Tobago's Legal System

Chapter four speaks about the laws which restrict as well as vouch for the female bodily autonomy in Trinidad and Tobago. Female bodily autonomy is closely associated with women's reproductive rights and their access to resources and support. Thus, this chapter takes a cursory glance at Trinidad and Tobago's rape laws and the protection they provide, as well as the abortion laws.

Trinidad and Tobago's laws include the Sexual Offences Act in which a myriad of laws relating to sexual crimes are covered. Under this Act, rape is defined as sexual intercourse with another person "without the consent of the complainant where he knows that the complainant does not consent to the intercourse or he is reckless as to whether the complainant consents," (6). The punishment for this offence is life imprisonment, and monetary compensation if ordered by the Court. This section also applies to marital rape. Therefore, this Act provides protection to victims of many kinds of sexual offences.

The issue, however, is not the lack of laws around rape and sexual assault, but the lack of awareness of such laws along with the heterosexist nature of Caribbean culture. Due to the lack of awareness, many men are not aware that their behaviour is illegal and an indictable offence. Many women do not know that they have a right to report this behaviour. Often, rape and sexual assault can be difficult for the victims to even recognize it for what it is. This can be due to the lack of sexual education in the educational system where consent can not only be taught but encouraged. The rape culture of the Caribbean prevents victims from reporting the crime for fear of stigmatization by the people around them as well as not being believed - the common,

demeaning question of "What were you wearing?" The act of reporting and relaying details of the incident to the authorities is traumatic in itself. But authorities cannot enforce the law unless someone reports it because of the intimacy of the offence.

The Offences against the Person Act contains the abortion laws for Trinidad and Tobago. This Act makes abortion unlawful without explicitly identifying the circumstances which allow for an abortion to be procured legally. The penalty for this offence is a four-year imprisonment sentence. The Medical Board's Code of Ethics states that under Section 56 and 57 of the Offences against the Person Act Chapter 11:08, the procuring of an abortion or the assisting of procuring one is unlawful. However, the common law doctrine of necessity, taken from *Rex v Borne* 1938 3 All ER 615, recognizes that "an abortion can be lawfully performed by a physician, in a medically appropriate setting, if the procedure is performed in good faith to preserve the life or health (including the mental health), of the mother." An abortion is deemed to be lawful if it preserves the life of the mother. This means that the woman seeking an abortion can only have one legally if she were under extreme emotional distress in which she posed a danger to herself and others, or if the pregnancy posed physical danger to her life.

While this law provides room for the doctors and the woman to work around, there is a lack of essential concepts which contribute to women's bodily autonomy. The law does not provide a woman the right to an abortion in the case of financial instability where she cannot afford to have a child or additional children. The law does not account for a person's age, for example if a woman is too young to have children or if she simply does not want to. The circumstance of a rape victim wanting to procure an abortion is also excluded from these sections of the law. In my view, emotional and physical trauma of the incident can be used to justify the procedure. However, in these cases, it falls on the doctor to make that justification.

Some physicians have admitted that they almost always withhold the option to terminate the pregnancy due to mental health because of the ambiguity of the law (Martin et al 98). Private doctors are more likely to be willing to carry out the procedure as they are not attached to the state. However, doctors risk having their licenses revoked or facing disciplinary hearings. In these instances, there is little protection for the woman or physician.

On the other hand, the abortion law is not actively enforced. This allows those who can afford a safe procedure to execute it with minimal fear (Martin et al 98). Unfortunately, the statute mainly impacts younger women and women who are of a lower financial class as safe abortions at private health facilities are costly. Many abortions procured by poorer women are done in unhygienic spaces by unqualified persons which result in injury. Some even opt for unsupervised medical terminations by ingesting specific pharmaceutical drugs (Martin et al 98).

Many citizens of Trinidad and Tobago do not possess accurate knowledge of the current abortion law. In a study conducted with 370 men and 548 women, 57% of the respondents did not know the law (Martin et al 106). However, the knowledge of the legal status of abortion was closely associated with education levels instead of opposition propaganda (Martin et al 106). "It is noteworthy that people are more likely to support abortion grounds where the woman's life or health is at risk or where she is a victim of sexual violence or abuse. Respondents are generally less supportive of the more prevalent reasons women access abortions — poverty, single motherhood,… [or] a woman does not wish to have a child at that time," (Martin et all 106). Most respondents, with women outnumbering men, supported the reform of the current law, although not all were pro-choice for any circumstance. Poverty, single motherhood and the desire to simply not have children are not regarded as legitimate reasons to have an abortion.

This chapter examined the laws of Trinidad and Tobago which relate to female bodily autonomy. There are laws to protect victims of rape and sexual assault, but due to the lack of awareness and rape culture of the Caribbean, these laws are seldom enforced. On the other hand, the abortion laws of the country are vague and provide little protection for victims of rape and other circumstances.

CONCLUSION

Although Trinidad and Tobago's legal landscape possesses the laws to combat rape and rape culture, there lies a socio-educational disparity which does not allow for the proper enforcement of these laws. In conjunction with the rape laws, there are some abortion laws which provide minimal female bodily autonomy. This gives women a recourse in possibly reclaiming what may have been stolen from them. However, the disconnect which prevents this justice exists in a myriad of social aspects that do not work in tandem with the law.

Homophobia and heteronormativity are entrenched within Caribbean culture. The evidence lies in something as significant as our music which continues to perpetuate rape culture. This cultural abyss will continue to widen without grave attention to the disconnect itself. I encourage sexual education within and outside of schools with attention to rape, sexual assault, and consent. It is essential that adults and children alike learn the basics of these concepts. Furthermore, we must hold our artists and public figures accountable for their prejudiced attitudes and destructive behaviours that contribute to the normalisation of rape culture in contemporary society. These are a few steps forward to ensure that we bury rape culture deep where it cannot be revived.

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