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Tool or Weapon? The Politics of Policy Making, Gender Justice and Social Change in the Caribbean



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Editors: **Michelle V. Rowley** and **Deborah McFee**

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Editorial

Tool or Weapon? The Politics of Policy Making, Gender Justice and Social Change in the Caribbean

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Introduction

Working on an issue that invited scholars to engage the issue of gender and policy in the Caribbean has caused us both to reckon with what exactly would count as “policy” in and for the Caribbean region. We were stumped by the realization that too often, the words that are proximal to the category of “policy” – “health,” “public,” “foreign,” “culture,” “gender,” – come in for quite a sustained and rigorous engagement, while the actual use of “policy,” the thing being modified by “health,” “public,” “foreign,” “culture” or “gender” is left holding the status of common knowledge, a kind of pact and secret handshake between author and reader. Obfuscation notwithstanding, what we know is that policy, like law, justice, government, development and gender are frequently conveyed as deceptively simple concepts (Engle Merry, 2009).

Ironically, scholars in the fields where we would expect this operationalizing to be done – say for example, public policy or political science - themselves merely mark the lacuna before simply moving on to offer their own rigorous analysis of their core thematic engagement, while the operationalization of policy itself languishes. Efforts to confront this problem of meaning have sometimes swung so wide as to be meaningless themselves. Take for example, Dye’s assertion that policy is essentially “whatever governments choose to do or not to do” (Dye, 1998:1). Or, similarly, Lowi and Ginsberg’s framing of policy as “an officially expressed intention backed by a sanction, which can be a reward or a punishment.” (1996: 607). These are not definitions that help in a world where policy is temporal, temperamental and often conveyed by fiat via social media, or alternatively in policy environments where the actors and sites are anything but discrete, tending toward blurred, opportunistic and imbricated relationships. In other words, in these conceptual renderings where “government” begins and ends or alternatively, where exactly is policy made are matters that are far more messy, more readily felt and, at times, untraceable because of the region’s geographic, economic and institutional scale.

Policy-making in the Caribbean emerges from a multi-faceted, fluid, and at times eclectic, ad hoc, shape-shifting constellation of actors, arenas and approaches. Historically, policy has emerged from disciplinary locations such as economist Sir Arthur Lewis's dual sector economy or T.S. Simey's influence on welfare planning, or further, the entanglements of policy with politics, as reflected in the region's many five-year strategic plans, as well as through interactions with and pressures from global actors. In this imbricated sense, the region's peoples and institutions are never far removed from the effects of Caribbean policy-making, despite efforts that might make public policy appear as though guided by absolutes, objectively constructed, and devoid of personal stakes that are inevitably bounded to the structural.

Caribbean feminists, with a clear understanding and critique of the state's power to shape our possibilities to be, have historically approached it as a product of our social reality and have attempted to use policy toward a practice of democratizing citizenship. Their work has offered an unapologetic unveiling of the ways that policy has not only been masculinized but has often been, literally, the business of men. In the midst of this, there has been an intermittent but strident critique of this masculinization in politics (Barriteau 2001), in education (Leo Rhynie, Barrow and Bailey 1997), gender mainstreaming approaches (Rowley 2011, Hosein and Parpart 2016) and banking (Lycette and White 1989) to name but a few. Caribbean feminist interruptions of the state's exercise of power have been many and carry a long life. For example, Hazel Brown's Housewives Association of Trinidad and Tobago (1971), established as a means of ensuring that economic policy (e.g. pricing of goods), was mindful of women as single mothers, as consumers, as low-income wage earners. Or, as another example, the *Women in the Caribbean Project*, whose research-based approach provided a multidisciplinary understanding of Caribbean women's lived realities, with the clear intent of challenging Caribbean state-actors' imagined sense of the "legitimate" citizen/actor around whom policy is framed. With the complete awareness of Caribbean women's historical ability to "act independently of official policy to improve their situation," Joycelyn Massiah saw

some of the most productive dimensions of the Project residing in its capacity to inform new approaches to planning and “human resource development” where “information about women [would] be included in decision-making and policy making processes” (1986: 165). And, in the more contemporary lobby for national gender policies, we find that the work of crafting a gender policy, when led by state actors with a feminist bent, is as much informed by these earlier regional quests for equity as they are a response to international imperatives about “why gender matters.” Faced with a problem of meaning, we thought it best to think inductively, theorizing from the pieces that appear in this issue, drawing on their interventions in order to think more broadly about the role of policy in the English-speaking Caribbean.

In that sense, policy may well become whatever governments choose to do, but what are the ramifications for small-island states, when acts of “choosing” can be greatly constrained by economic and political flows that far exceed the actual boundaries of the nation-state? Two of the pieces in the issue point us in the direction of thinking about policy formulation in the Caribbean as always already a trans/national artifact. Patricia Rosenfield's ***Reflections on American Philanthropy in the Caribbean: The Influential Role of Caribbean Women*** brings historical depth and a transnational ethos to the discussion. Rosenfield offers an overview of the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations' and Carnegie Corporation's early twentieth century presence in the Caribbean. Reversing the expected flows of power, Rosenfield highlights the ways in which Caribbean feminist activists worked to ensure that the priorities and programmes of the Foundations were responsive to the needs of the region. There are multiple locations and histories at work, highlighting as it does the early public health work of these organizations, the influence of US politics on their policy direction, the ramification of their interventions for ongoing work in the Caribbean and the role that Caribbean feminists played in ensuring that the needs of the region remained central to the policy direction of these organizations.

Similarly, Deborah McFee's ***Women/Gender and Development in Trinidad and Tobago and Post-Genocide Rwanda: Complicating Human Security, Carving out a National Gender Policy Response to Violence Against Women***, which follows makes a case for the role that national gender policies might play in mitigating state and communal violence. McFee's piece offers a comparative discussion between Rwanda and Trinidad and Tobago and their different processes in formulating a national gender policy. The piece positions Rwanda didactically in order to mark what Trinidad and Tobago might learn about the possibilities of a gender policy to intervene in narratives of violence, in its yet to be implemented national gender policy. It is a given that feminists have invested in national gender policies as instruments of equity; McFee's work however raises this already high bar to consider whether these policies might also act as instruments of peace.

Building on the transnational dimension of policy formulation, Sheila Stewart provides a necessary voice of a regional feminist-activist practitioner on the structures of global governance, namely the United Nation's 2030 Agenda for advancement of women's rights as human rights and the link between peace, security and democracy. This contribution entitled, ***How Can the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Transform the Economic Empowerment of Women in the Caribbean Sub-region?*** is a carefully written, detailed analysis of the post MDG language of sustainable development, gender equity and equality and women's empowerment that will ultimately provide a framework for much of the state-based work around public policy on women and gender in the Caribbean. Stewart's work is instructive in a number of ways. She very clearly brings to the fore the language of the UN; by the end of the piece the Sustainable Development goals are evident and the place of the stand-alone gender and development goal 5 is very evident. However, Stewart's very relevant, Caribbean-based grounding of the key concepts of the 2030 Agenda and the overview she provides to this new framing of women's economic empowerment benefits from her identifying regional labour market-based challenges to women's economic autonomy, gender equality and issues

related to unpaid work and care, is significant forming a policy space informed by multiple perspectives. Interestingly, it is in her engagement of these issues that she provides an invaluable synergy between her work and those layers of questions that are identified in Rowley's treatment of NGPs. Additionally, she too highlights questions of gender blindness and the cost of such underlying assumptions in the policy making process.

Michelle V. Rowley in her piece entitled ***Should We Still Hope? Gender Policy, Social Justice, and Affect in the Caribbean*** facilitates a revisiting of the idea of the National Gender Policy. This revisiting takes place as an interrogation of the National Gender Policy as an instrument of development pushing toward a consideration of the role that affect theory might play in the ever-evolving state-based processes inherent in addressing the complexity of gender-based inequity. The piece interrogates gender policy as a search for meaning among contending constituencies and the interconnections that exists between individual positions situated within accepted gender norms and the structural inequalities that are the core business of the NGP. Rowley's work creates a productive, interactive space between Caribbean governments and Caribbean peoples in our journey to make meaning of and to institutionalize gender, gender justice and gender equality. As she grounds our understanding of these variables, this paper brings to the fore a number of critical engagements which include: the transformational possibilities of gender equality as a goal as it is framed in the current language of regional public policy, the significance of persistent obfuscation of some groups while prioritizing the needs of others, thereby making very evident the perpetuating of entrenched systems of discrimination within clear policy objectives of the building of systems of gender equity. This paper draws some innovative parallels. One such parallel is found in its call on both policy making and activism to reflect on the complex relationships between the absence of gender justice for our gender non-conforming citizens and our persistent inability to provide for the poor, the homeless and the elderly regionally. It also leaves our advocacy and activism to grapple with whether it is at all possible to have a *gender policy in the absence*

of a gender polity, as is presently the case when populations, state machineries, advocates and practitioners speak with and past one another in the making of regional National Gender Policies.

The submissions to this issue remind us that at its best, policy is an enabling device between the needs of the population and the power of the state. Tracie Rogers' discussion is a meditation on the vulnerabilities that emerge when this population/power relationship is breeched, as it so often is. Rogers' work provokes us to think about the ways in which Caribbean youth are far too frequently marginalized from discussions of state care and responsibility and subsequent policy formulation. Her piece, ***Silence, Invisibility and Social Policy: Putting the Pieces Together with HIV Positive Youth*** foregrounds the structural vulnerabilities that hinder Caribbean youth from disclosing their HIV status. Rogers's work pushes back against these invisibilities by drawing on a participatory research methodology in which she positions her youth subjects as co-collaborators in a discussion of HIV/AIDS care.

The themes of advocacy, invisibilizing and the legitimizing of constituencies in policy making in the area of women and gender is also reflected in the Simone Leid's contribution to this issue of the CRGS.

Leid's paper, ***Legitimizing Virtual Constituencies: How CSOs are Using Digital Technologies to Enlarge the Space for Citizen Participation in Women and Gender Issues in the Caribbean***, places the politics of policy making squarely in a 21st century dialectic. She explores the place of online social movements in expanding the democratic possibilities by their ability to 'by-pass' traditional gatekeepers to impact on policy by creating innovative methodologies and tools to deepen ideas of legitimacy and reconfigure constituencies in the policy process. Leid's piece provides a real-time challenge to traditional regional feminist organizing. According to her, the opportunity presented to civil society by the virtual world, while it enlarges its constituency base, notions such as membership and representation are forced to be revisited. In the midst of this

challenge, the overview provided by Leid's research on regional cyber activism conducted by a web survey platform creates a rich and comprehensive reading of emerging forms of activism and the inevitable power of such a voice. Interestingly the power of one such voice of cyber activism is looked at by Amilcar Sanatan in the interview section of this issue of the CRGS.

Ideal type renderings of what "policy" might mean and do would suggest that policy formulation arises out of prisms of rationality. The façade of rationality invariably hides the ways in which it is analogous to the craft of sausage-making – messy in its process and consumed once contained. As editors, we wanted to lay bare both process and person. Mc Fee's interviews with Folade Mutota and Jane Parpart present insight into two different positionalities. Using an interactive and reflexive methodology, Parpart and McFee reflect on the efforts at mainstreaming gender within the state and argue for more capacious understandings of "gender" within the state's policy direction if gender mainstreaming is to achieve its intended goal of social equity and justice. McFee's conversation with Mutota offers a different tact in its engagement with Mutota's intersectional, activist encounters with both the Pan-Africanist and feminist movements in the Caribbean. Reading across these political terrains, the interview invites us to think about the synergies that have informed the growth of Caribbean feminisms and its imbricated entanglement with transracial politics, as well as socialist and Pan Africanist political sentiment.

Lastly, ***Enduring Sexed and Gendered Criminal Laws in the Anglophone Caribbean*** brings us to a legal commentary by Arif Bulkan and Tracy Robinson. Rooted in the need for public policy to open access to the varied forms that a just society could take, this commentary brings to the fore the power of strategic litigation as a mechanism to advance gender equity within the regional legal system. The commentary presents the work of the UWI Rights Advocacy Project (U-RAP), an outreach activity of the Faculty of Law The UWI established in 2009 concerned with promoting social justice and human rights in the Anglophone Caribbean. Bulkan and Robinson focus on U-Rap's work on law reform of the

indictable offence which criminalises “unnatural” sex in Belize, a summary offence in Guyana criminalising cross-dressing in public for an “improper purpose”. What becomes evident with a careful reading of this commentary is how much the historical, socio-cultural colonial-based legacy of Caribbean society is intricately tied to our treatment of gender, equality and citizenship in our legal systems. It reinforces the difficulty in divorcing our legal structures from our social realities. Additionally, the use of this legal example provides an ideal opportunity to unpack some of the conundrums and contradictions inherent in fulfilling policy commitments to gender justice and the protection of human rights within constrained notions of gender and gender identity. In the midst of these multiple conundrums this contribution makes evident the opportunity to the advancement of gender equity afforded by what Michelle Rowley refers to as a gender polity. Their strategic litigation and efforts at educating in order to influence public debates, might well offer a model of how we might begin the difficult conversations that inhabit gender policy making in the Anglophone Caribbean.

Adding to the activist bent of the issue, ***Social Media and Feminist Social Change in the Caribbean: An Interview with Ronelle King on #LifeInLeggings, an interview with Amilcar Sanatan***, focuses on a response to a very personal experience of the failings of those institutions designed to protect and serve regional populations from experiences of gender-based violence. The emergence and growth of #LifeInLeggings sheds a very critical light on regional policy responses to the oldest area of regional feminist activism. 24 year-old, self-identified feminist from St Michael Barbados, Ronelle King illustrates the power of the strategic use of the virtual world to compel policy makers to reflect on the critical need for us to increase regional activism around gender-based violence through a feminist-informed lens. Sanatan's exchange with King provides a very mindful mapping of some of the issues brought to bear in the Leid piece. One of the most thought-provoking issues is the fact that her activism, like Leid's, is borne out of a personal experience. The capacity of the virtual world to be a place where the personal can quickly become political activism is made very

clear and reinforced, as Sanatan provides us with the creatively logged details of his feminist conversation between Caribbean youth. Of particular importance to this conversation is its boundless capacity to provide a sketch of Caribbean gender relations, the processes of building gender justice as a mind space and the collaborative spaces that become pivotal for the sustaining and advancement of any movement.

The issue reviews Gabrielle Hosein and Jane Parpart's **Negotiating Gender, Policy and Politics in the Caribbean: Feminist Strategies, Masculinist Resistance and Transformational Possibilities** (2017). The edited collection is an empirically rich encounter with the policy efforts underway throughout the region toward the realization of gender justice. Tonya Haynes presents a careful and thorough review of the work – asking us, as she does, to now consider how the collection of essays builds and expands upon earlier scholarship in the field. We need only read the title of Jewel Fraser's review of Frédérique Bedos' documentary, "**Des Femmes et Des Hommes – A Missed Opportunity**," to grasp Fraser's level of dissatisfaction with Bedos' ability to convey the extent to which the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have enriched women's lives.

To some extent every submission to the issue is working through some aspect of a difficult conversation that forms a lens into policy making in the area of women and gender in the Anglophone Caribbean. We also saw this issue on gender and policy as an opportunity to think about the ways that we might complicate the ways that these conversations can be held. The need to find alternative ways of representing these difficult conversations, brings us to the art of **Intersectionality and Imagery in the Caribbean Context** by Dominique Hunter. Dominique Hunter is a young and upcoming Guyanese artist whose contribution to the issue offers a discussion of the politics of her art, alongside a clear critique of the ways in which Caribbean states have abdicated in providing support for the training and work of the region's artists. We close off the issue with two pieces of poetry, Amilcar Sanatan's "Nineteen Eighties Hymns: For the IMF and IBRD and Ministers of Finance" sings a "Sankey" for those harmed and promises

broken as a result of the work of the Bretton Woods institutions in the region. Kevisha Cordice's poignant and moving performance conveys the trauma and pain of sexual violence, its prevalence and its insidious infiltration into experiences of childhood. We end here, because the business of policy is unfinished business, the future is plentiful but our hope is that the heaviness you feel as you listen to this poem will be harnessed into demanding a policy framework that is accountable to issues of justice.

The “inner life” of policy-making tends to get our attention only when the gaps between planning and implementation become untenable (Wu, Ramesh, Howlett, & Fritzen, 2010). This issue we have aimed to preempt this logic by highlighting the many ways in which policy processes are rife with inconsistencies, irrationality and absence of coordination, despite efforts to render it as a rational process. The experience of post-colonial states in the area of women and gender, such as those located in the Anglophone Caribbean, compels us to look beyond the significance of policy making as the pursuit and the valuing of absolutes, towards a more organic re-reading of the idea of objectivity. This issue of the *Caribbean Review of Gender Studies* brings us into a more organic reflection of the uses, definitions and processes of policy making as it relates to the Anglophone Caribbean. The essays, interviews, artistic contributions and commentaries carefully capture a host of researched positions, perceptions and viewpoints that facilitate an interwoven mapping of the politics of policy making as it pertains to women, gender and development. The authors and contributors in some way speak to each other and elucidate various points within each other's work.

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How Can the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Transform the Economic Empowerment of Women in the Caribbean Sub-region?

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Abstract

Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls play a central role in the United Nations (UN) transformative 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which is designed to catalyse action at the global and national levels during the next 15 years in areas deemed critical for the attainment of sustainable development through its 17 goals and 169 targets. Many of the targets recognise women's equality and empowerment as both the objective and as part of the solution. Goal 5, the stand-alone gender goal, is dedicated to achieving these ends.

In this regard, the SDGs represent a significant step forward in promoting gender equality and women's economic empowerment, covering for the first time areas such as the recognition and valuing of unpaid care and domestic work.

This paper focuses attention on the economic empowerment of women and girls as a strategy for accelerating gender equality through implementation of the SDGs, which provides the framework for mainstreaming gender issues into national policies and programmes. In making this argument, the paper highlights some of the major development challenges facing the Caribbean sub-region in its efforts to achieve greater equality, particularly gender equality, and to promote sustainable development for all.

Keywords: femininity, *Girlie Girl*, gender identity, Trinidad and Tobago, feminist post structuralist feminist discourse analysis, emerging adults

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Introduction

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provides a global framework for advancing the three dimensions of sustainable development, namely the economic, social and environmental, to ensure greater equity and sustainability. The 2030 Agenda is designed to catalyse action in priority areas deemed critical for the attainment of sustainable development. Many of the targets identify women's equality and empowerment as both the objective and as an integral component of the solution recognizing that women have a central role to play in all of the 17 goals. Goal 5, the stand-alone gender goal, is dedicated to achieving these ends.

This paper seeks to examine how the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 5, can be used as a catalyst to help accelerate the achievement of economic empowerment for Caribbean women. In this context, the gender dimensions of economic empowerment in the Caribbean sub-region will be discussed in an effort to identify issues that will need to be addressed in order to enhance, foster and increase opportunities for self-employment through entrepreneurship, and achieve not only economic empowerment, but also sustainable development and equality, including gender equality, by 2030.

Overview of the SDG Goals

The 2030 Agenda is an ambitious and transformative framework for development which acknowledges the critical links between inequality, social exclusion and poverty. The vision of the SDG goals and targets is that of a world in which every woman and girl enjoys full gender equality and all legal social and economic barriers to their empowerment have been removed. The 2030 Agenda also envisages a world in which every country enjoys sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth and decent work for all. (UN 2015).

The SDGs are designed to accelerate progress through a more inclusive path to sustainable development and include a strong commitment to increasing

gender equality (Bandelet, 2016/14: 8). In this regard, the SDGs represent a significant step forward in promoting gender equality and women's economic empowerment, covering for the first time areas such as the recognition and valuing of unpaid care and domestic work. As emphasised by the General Assembly, the realisation of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls would strategically make a critical contribution to progress across all goals and targets. There are more specific gender targets in many of the 17 goals which show the linkages between women's rights and the three dimensions of sustainable development. Furthermore, each goal contains concrete means of implementation alongside the dedicated goal on Means of Implementation (Goal 17).

The standalone Goal 5 on the achievement of gender¹ equality² and the empowerment of women and girls is formulated on the basis of strong gender analysis which recognizes the interconnections between gender inequality and the economic, political and social aspects of sustainable development (Esquivel and Sweetman 2016). The attainment of gender equality expressed in Goal 5 is central for the overall achievement of all of the SDGs, and is therefore more deeply integrated into the 2030 Agenda when compared to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (UNESCO 2015). The stronger gender analysis in the 2030 Agenda means that the articulation of gender issues in the other "non-gender-specific" goals is more evident.

Outline

This paper provides an overview of key concepts relating to women's economic empowerment and gender and the relevance of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development alongside other international agreements aimed at achieving gender equality, such as the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, for women economic empowerment and gender equality. It goes on to offer a brief situational analysis of the challenges facing women with respect to employment opportunities and participation in the labour force and focuses attention on a number of barriers to the

attainment of women's economic autonomy, including unpaid care work which serves to restrict women's full participation in the labour force and in other economic activities such as business development and entrepreneurship. Finally, I offer a situational analysis of women and decent work and employment in the Caribbean sub-region, including an examination of issues such as labour force segregation and the gender pay gap. Here, I provide an overview of the participation of women in business in the formal sector of entrepreneurship and seek to identify not only the challenges facing these women but also some potential policy interventions to address these challenges.

Section IV pulls the preceding discussions together and provides some recommendations for policy and programme actions to foster the attainment of the economic empowerment of women in the Caribbean sub-region.

SECTION I

Conceptual and Definitional Issues

Among the catalysts for accelerating the achievement of the SDGs and multiplying their impact are gender-equality and the empowerment of women. Further, the economic empowerment of women has been identified as a prerequisite for sustainable development, and a key factor in achieving gender equality with the ability to boost economies (Global Banking Alliance for Women).

Gender Equality

Equality, particularly gender equality, is an essential component of sustainable social development. As a basic human right, it does not need economic justification, yet gender equality has multifaceted and positive implications for economic, social and environmental development, and can contribute significantly to economic growth (Ward et al. 2010). Therefore, promoting

gender equality has the potential to foster sustainable development and this is reflected in the inclusion of gender-related targets in many of the sustainable development goals.

Inequalities are fundamental social and economic barriers to sustainability, and underlie most of the social development challenges in the Caribbean SIDS, including poverty, crime, migration, and gender relations. Inequalities based on sex are a product of socially constructed norms, practices and power relations and are a pervasive feature of all societies (UNRISD 2005). Men are assigned the role of breadwinner in most societies and as such are more likely to be placed under greater obligation to participate in paid work, which also gives them greater access to financial resources and economic empowerment (Kabeer 2008).

As highlighted by the International Labour Organization (ILO), men play a significant role in promoting women's economic empowerment by assisting their female partners and family members to access resources that are essential to their economic empowerment. Men can also benefit from greater gender equality, for example, "the pressure of being the main breadwinner of the household is lifted and they build healthier relationships with their wives/partners and children". (ILO 2014, 2).

The United Nations 2015 Human Development Report states that work in all its forms, including paid employment, unpaid care work, voluntary work and creative work, contributes to the richness of human lives and is a major factor in the progress of human development in the past quarter century. This is because work in all its forms enables people to be economically secure and to earn a livelihood. It is essential for equitable economic growth, poverty reduction and gender equality (UNDP 2015).

When all the dimensions of this concept are analysed, it becomes clear that the achievement of gender equality cannot be isolated from the interactions within

and between households, markets - including labour markets - and institutions. Attention must be focused at all times on the three domains of gender equality, namely the personal, private, and public, that also influence sustainable development and economic empowerment.

Economic Empowerment of Women

The concept of empowerment has its roots in social change work and is essentially concerned with changing and transforming power relations. Early applications of the concept were influenced by feminist thought which was deemed radical and concerned with the transformation of power relations in favour of women's rights and the attainment of greater equality between women and men. Sen, for example, states that empowerment is, first and foremost, about power, and its transformative value lies in bringing about change in power relations in favour of those who previously exercised little power and control over their own lives. *"If power means control, then empowerment ... is the process of gaining control"*. (Sen 1997:20).

However, it must be emphasised that empowerment is not something that can be bestowed by others but is a process of understanding and recognizing inequalities in power and rights, and taking action to bring about structural change in favour of greater equality through access to, and control over, material resources. This includes providing women with access to credit and business opportunities and the means to generate income to enable them to better manage their economic situation.

Economic empowerment takes place when both women and men have the ability to participate in, contribute to and benefit from economic growth processes in ways that not only recognise but value their contributions, respect their dignity, and make it possible to negotiate a fairer and more equitable distribution of the benefits of growth (OECD 2011). In this respect, an integral measure of economic empowerment relates to the level of income earned by

women in comparison to men, primarily through their participation in the labour market.

When women are empowered, their access to resources and opportunities such as jobs, financial services, education and skill development, property and other productive assets is increased. More critical is that when women are economically empowered this transcends to their family members and to their immediate communities because these women are more likely than men to invest their earnings into the health and education of family members, especially children in the household, as well as into community projects.

The benefits of women's economic empowerment extend far beyond the household level as empirical evidence has demonstrated that economies grow when more women are in paid employment. A recent report by the McKinsey Global Institute asserted *"gender inequality is not only a pressing moral and social issue but also a critical economic challenge. If women - who account for half the world's working age population - do not achieve their full economic potential, the global economy will suffer."* (McKinsey Global Institute 2015)

The empowerment of women and girls has become a mainstream development concern, "as a means to lift economies, drive growth, improve infant and child health, enhance women's skills and open up opportunities for women's economic and political engagement" (Cornwell 2014). It is within this context of providing opportunities to increase women's economic participation in the labour market and other economic activities that the concept of economic empowerment will be addressed in this paper.

Labour Markets as Gendered Institutions

Gender inequality is one of the most widespread and persistent forms of social and economic inequality. This extends to labour markets, which are shaped by social norms and power inequalities. As Seguino (2008) states *"inequality in the labour market is not only due to differences in human capital (education,*

experience, work effort), but also to institutional power dynamics at the household and enterprise levels". While policy-makers are slowly recognising its importance to development processes, gender inequality continues to be poorly understood or is simply misunderstood.

While women are not necessarily excluded from the workplace, cultural beliefs continue to underlie unconscious biases and assumptions, which serve to limit female participation at all levels of the labour market (Ibid). Women are less likely than their male counterparts to have access to working capital, social contacts (through networking) and the different types of skills and experiences necessary for improving their participation in the labour market. Gender-based inequalities and related barriers are often responsible for these differences. (UNRISD 2012). These gender-related constraints combined with labour market forces interact in shaping the extent and patterns of women's labour force participation. (Kabeer 2008, 67)

When compared with other regions, there is no denial that the presence of women in the Caribbean labour market is very strong. However, this strength is weakened by the fact that their entrepreneurial potential is not being realised. The trend is for women in the Caribbean to be *"over-represented at the lower end of the labour market, and under-represented at the high end of the labour market where the greatest potential for contributing to economic growth is located"*. (Lashley 2009, 63).

SECTION II

Gender and the Economy in the Caribbean Sub-region

There is some synergy between Goal 8 of the SDGs and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA) which identified the role of women in the economy as one of the critical areas of concern and proposed six strategic

objectives on “women and the economy” as areas for action at national level to bring about the empowerment of women and girls and gender equality in the world of work. These actions include facilitation of equal access to employment and the harmonization of work and family responsibilities for women and men. The 2015 HDR identifies work as a “*foundation for both the richness of economies and the richness of human lives*”. It goes on to argue that work is more likely to be viewed for its economic value rather than in terms of its potential to enhance human development (UNDP 2015).

The promotion of domestic entrepreneurship and small business development is being pursued by Caribbean governments to help grow the economy. Barbados, like many other Caribbean countries, is a predominantly service-based economy with the services sector accounting for a substantive percentage of value-added gross domestic product and employment. In 2014 the GDP share of the services sector was estimated at close to 84 per cent and employment in the sector represented 74 per cent of the labour force (Commonwealth Secretariat 2015). The significance of these statistics is the gender distribution of employment in the services sector. Although women dominate this sector in terms of employment, they only represent a fraction of services sector business owners. This is because the enabling environment to promote women's entry into domestic entrepreneurship and small business development is virtually absent in Barbados, as is the case in most Caribbean countries, where much remains to be done to reduce gender gaps in entrepreneurship rates and in employment and wages.

Women and Employment

Although Caribbean women have historically participated in the labour force since the days of plantation slavery, their participation rates remain stubbornly lower than those of their male counterparts. As Morrison states, the determinants of female labour force participation and earnings are complex, which requires that any policy intervention should address these complexities in an informed manner, rather than take the customary route of assuming that “one size fits all”,

whereby generic gender-neutral macroeconomic policies are designed and implemented on the assumption that both men and women will benefit equally from these policies, which are designed to generate economic growth and create employment opportunities.

There must be targeted action designed at bringing about transformative change based on an understanding of the underlying factors which influence women's decision to participate in paid and/or unpaid work which are immense. (Morrison et al. 2007, 8-9).

UN WOMEN has identified three priority actions that are required in order

“to transform economies and realize women's economic and human rights, namely (1) decent work for women; (2) gender-responsive social policies; and (3) rights-based macroeconomic policies”. (Ibid).

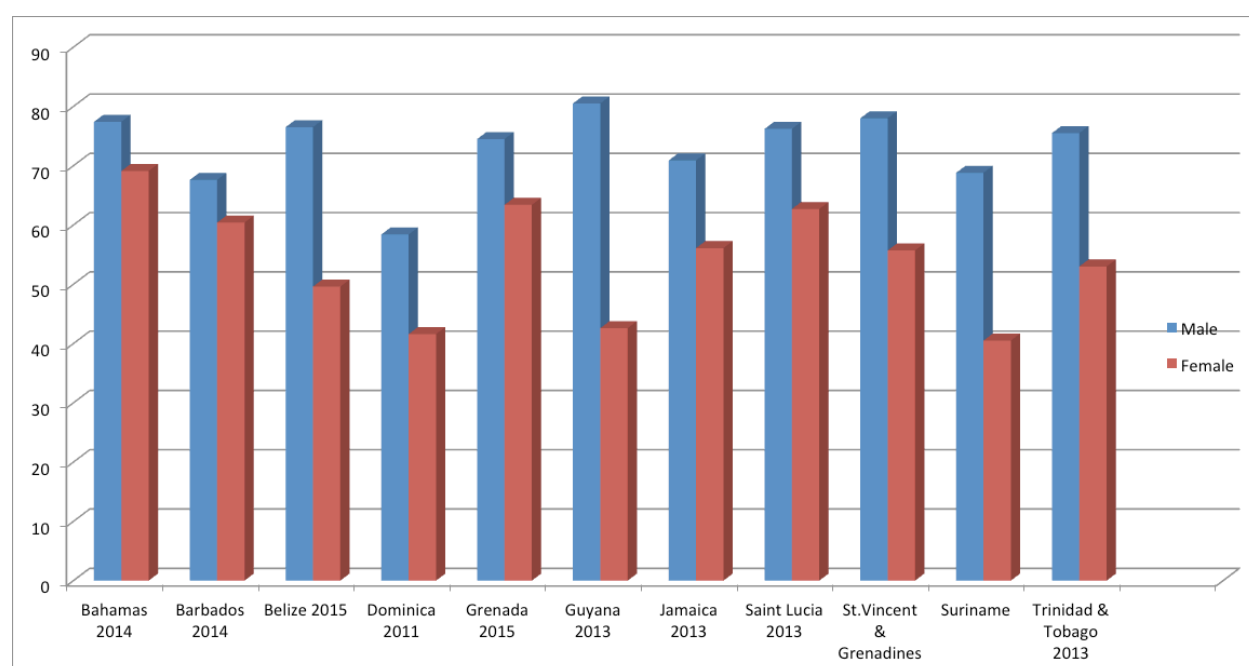
In essence, the policy framework has already been laid out and agreed upon. The 2030 Agenda provides the framework for action and for strategic implementation of these policies to advance women's economic empowerment. In addition to the BPfA, Caribbean states committed to the ILO Decent Work Agenda³ (ILO, 2013), which is defined as not just the creation of jobs, but also the creation of jobs of acceptable quality. It makes clear that the level of employment (quantity) cannot be divorced from its quality, including the different forms of work and different conditions of work.

The link between gender inequality, employment and social exclusion

The effective promotion of social inclusion requires analysis and understanding of the multidimensional factors and dynamics that work against it, namely social exclusion (UNDESA 2016) and poverty. Exclusion can be identified when individuals, based on a number of variables, are unable to participate in economic, social, political and cultural life. These variables include age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, as well as economic and migrant status.

Unpaid work therefore serves to exclude women from the paid labour force relegating many to the informal sector, which tends to be more precarious and vulnerable and devoid of social protection. In many cases, women are excluded from the labour force because of a range of other barriers, including the unequal access to paid work. [Figure 1](#) below attempts to show the linkages between gender equality, the household and participation in the labour force and the impact on poverty.

Figure 1: Labour Force Participation Rates by Sex 2011 - 2015⁴ (Percentages)



Source: Commonwealth Secretariat 2014. Small States: Economic Review and Basic Statistics. Vol.17. London UK; Government of the Commonwealth of Dominica; Central Statistical Office of Grenada; The Bahamas Statistical Department; the Barbados Central Bank; Statistical Institute of Belize; UNDP Human Development Report, 2014. Sustaining Human Progress: Reducing Vulnerabilities and Building Resilience; UNDP Human Development Report, 2015: Work for Human Development.

The Caribbean sub-region continues to be challenged by the problems of inequalities across class and gender as women continue to experience the highest incidence of unemployment and poverty. (CDB 2013, 7). This is because they often lack the technical skills required to respond to labour market demands, subjecting them to further vulnerability to poverty. The higher levels of female unemployment are a further indicator of the gender dimension of

poverty, which is reflected in the nature of their economic participation and evidenced by the tendency of females to be more concentrated in menial low-paying jobs, often without access to social protection, and to predominate as providers of unpaid labour associated with domestic and caring roles.

The unequal gender division of unpaid household work “*has displayed a remarkable resilience and continues to shape the terms on which women are able to take up paid work*”. It also serves to limit the “*transformative potential of employment for*”... enhancing and improving the situation and status of women in the private sphere of the home as well as the public sphere in the wider society. (Ibid)

The Care Economy

Among the many obstacles that act as barriers to women's attainment of economic empowerment is society's dependence on women's unpaid work, either within the home or in the market, which results in women's increased time poverty⁵, and restricts their ability to fully engage in other economic activities such as paid work in the formal labour sector. The unpaid care work performed primarily by women, which includes cooking, cleaning and taking care of children, the elderly and other family members, underpins all societies, contributing to well-being, social development and economic growth. It is estimated that if unpaid care work were assigned a monetary value it would constitute between 10 and 39 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Francavilla et al. 2011). Unfortunately, it is generally not reflected in the system of national accounts and this valuable contribution remains mostly invisible and is therefore unrecognised by policy-makers.

This continues to contribute to gender inequality because of the unequal sharing of reproductive work between women and men in the care economy. In the Caribbean, with its high incidence of single female-headed households, it further places women at a significant disadvantage, since women's income often has to be spent on members of the immediate and extended family.

In order to redress the inequalities in the household, Seguino (2016) has recommended public investment in physical infrastructure, such as transportation and on-site daycare facilities, to reduce women's care burden and free up their time to spend in paid work, alongside complementary employment policies and skills training to enhance employability and ensure the substitution of market work for unpaid work. (Seguino 2016, 6-7). As a further measure care work should be redistributed and become the collective responsibility of not only women, but also that of men, particularly those who are parents, as well as the public and private sector through investments in the provision of childcare facilities and necessary support systems.

There is need for far reaching changes in the socio-cultural expectations regarding women's greater responsibilities for household duties, caring work, and child-rearing, which leaves them with less time to invest in paid work, networking and skills building. Social policy, which accommodates childcare and longer parental leave, can help shift cultural mores through action to change the gender division of unpaid work to encourage more men to share this work. Only two countries in the Caribbean, namely Dominica⁶ and the Cayman Islands, have policies on parental leave for both parents; however, data is needed on how many men are taking advantage of this policy and the extent to which it has enabled more women to engage in economic activities.

Although several states have sought to collect data on women's unwaged work and time use in the National Census, Trinidad and Tobago is the only country in the Caribbean to have introduced legislation in 1996, calling upon the Central Statistical Office and other public bodies to conduct time use surveys in order to collect and value the unremunerated work undertaken by both women and men.

A number of national gender policies such as the 2011 National Policy for Gender Equality of Jamaica, and the Draft National Policy on Gender and Development of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago include policy

recommendations on gender and care work. The Jamaica policy calls for the implementation of time-use surveys for understanding and measuring how unpaid work contributes to the national economy. It also calls for the creation of a system to capture, quantify and value unwaged/unpaid care labour and domestic work in the household and elsewhere (Jamaica 2011).

The Caribbean therefore remains the only region that is yet to carry out a full-scale time-use survey to quantify unpaid work undertaken primarily by women, but also includes unpaid work carried out by men. *This is deemed to be a major data gap in statistical systems in the Caribbean, where the valuation of unpaid work is statistically invisible. This continues to be a serious omission because it means that unpaid work, despite its important contribution to economic development, is not reflected in the economic statistics used for policy making – namely the national accounts and the official labour market statistics.*

SECTION III

Decent work

As has been elaborated upon in the preceding sections, women face many challenges with respect to their full participation in paid productive activities and suffer wage discrimination (ECLAC 2015). Available statistics reveal that more men participate in the formal labour market than women, and that unemployment rates for women are always higher than those of males.

The SDG Goal 8 calls for the promotion of *sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all*, with targets 8.3 calling for the promotion of *development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation*; and target 8.5 calling for the *achievement by 2030, of full and productive employment and decent work for*

all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value.

Data on labour force participation rates⁷ in the Caribbean reveal a very uneven playing field with respect to women's status and gender equality, showing that there are more males in the employed labour force than females, despite the fact that in most countries females comprise over fifty per cent of the population. One of the challenges associated with analysis of the labour market in the Caribbean is the incomplete and often inconsistent collection of data. (World Bank 2007; ILO 2013).

Despite outstanding and impressive advances in women's education in the Caribbean sub-region, their labour force participation rates remain substantively lower than those of men. Available data for women and men in CARICOM states for the four-year period 1998-2002 show that the female labour force participation rate was approximately 40 per cent representing just over a third of the participation rate for males. This represents a marginal increase of seven per cent for females from 33 per cent recorded over the 1980-1982 period. Caribbean women therefore continue to struggle to attain economic empowerment through paid employment and many face challenges including impediments to employment and social inclusion.

The Decent Work Agenda is based on an integrated and gender-mainstreamed approach consisting of four strategic objectives, which are: (i) Creating jobs; (ii) Guaranteeing rights at work; (iii) Extending social protection; and (iv) Promoting social dialogue. These four integrated pillars are designed to support national actions "to reduce poverty, encourage social inclusion and reinforce the rights-based approach to development by treating rights at work as Human Rights and also respect for international labour standards and national legislation. (ILO 2013, 83).

During the past ten years there has been some narrowing of the gender gap in the labour force participation rate, as can be seen in Figure I. This has been attributed to a combination of factors, namely (i) an increased demand for female labour, which is cheaper; (ii) the pressure on women to seek paid employment in order to replace or complement the (falling) earnings of other household members, due to the 2008/2009 financial and economic crises; and (iii) the growing trend on the part of women to seek paid employment because of their increasing levels of education, decreasing fertility rates and changing aspirations (UNRISD 2012).

This is an interesting development when juxtaposed against the fact that unemployment rates for both males and females declined during the post-crisis period. The data show that while the male participation rate declined slightly in Guyana, the female participation increased marginally. The Bahamas, Barbados, and Saint Lucia all recorded high levels of female participation in the labour force, which indicates a narrowing of the gap between males and female participation rates. Jamaica, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago are also showing increased female participation rates. Suriname, Guyana and Belize record lower participation rates for females.

Unemployment and Gender Trends

Available labour market information for Caribbean countries that periodically collect such data⁸ show repeatedly that unemployment among women is always higher than that among men and for the most part, women not only earn less than men, they tend to work longer hours. The data in table I below shows a marked increase in unemployment rates for both women and men during the period 2008 – 2009, in all countries for which data are available.

These trends are verified by the International Labour Organization), which attributed the lacklustre economic situation in the Caribbean to the post financial crisis situation. The crisis was credited with having a significant negative impact on the labour market in the Caribbean, where both women and men

suffered job losses. However, as stated above, given women's responsibility for the survival of families, especially in circumstances where they are the sole heads of households, their participation in the labour force is critical to family income.

Table I: Unemployed Numbers by Sex, 2005 - 2009, ('000)

Country	2005			2006			2007			2008			2009		
	M A L E	F E M A L E	T O T A L	M A L E	F E M A L E	T O T A L	M A L E	F E M A L E	T O T A L	M A L E	F E M A L E	T O T A L	M A L E	F E M A L E	T O T A L
Bahamas	...	...	18.2	...	...	13.8	...	...	14.6	...	...	16.6	...	...	26.2
Barbados	5.6	7.7	13.3	5.6	6.9	12.5	4.8	5.9	10.7	5.0	6.6	11.6	7.4	6.8	14.2
Belize	5.2	7.0	12.2	4.5	6.0	10.5	4.5	5.3	10.4	...	...	...	...	...	...
St. Lucia	6.4	8.5	14.9	5.3	7.9	13.2	4.3	6.9	11.2	5.9	7.0	12.9	7.5	7.9	15.4
Trinidad & Tobago	21.4	28.4	49.8	16.4	22.6	39.0	14.4	20.1	34.5	12.9	16.1	29.0	16.7	15.9	32.6

Sources:

Bahamas: Bahamas Statistics Department

Barbados: Statistical Service. Downloaded from B'dos Central Bank Online Statistics Database, 05 May 2016

Belize: Statistical Institute of Belize. Rates for April of each year. Population 14 years and over.

Saint Lucia: Central Statistical Office, Labour Force Indicators 1994-2014

Trinidad and Tobago: Central Statistical Office, Labour Force Indicators

Table II below shows that the unemployment rates among men were higher than those of females in Barbados. The unemployment rates reflected in table III indicate that as the national economic situation improved there were noticeable declines in unemployment rates and conversely, as national economies experienced declining growth unemployment rates soared, particularly in the service-based economies.

Much of the unemployment is created by burdensome austerity measures such as the privatization of government assets and services, cuts in public expenditure as well as welfare policies, health and social protection. As a result

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Caribbean women tend to bear the brunt of the costs and “fallout” of these austerity measures and continue to do so through their unpaid work in the care economy.

Table II: Unemployment Rates by Gender 2010 - 2015

Country	2010		2011		2012		2013		2014		2015	
	M A L E	F E M A L E	M A L E	F E M A L E	M A L E	F E M A L E	M A L E	F E M A L E	M A L E	F E M A L E	M A L E	F E M A L E
Antigua & Barbuda	---	---	11.0	9.4	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
Bahamas	---	---	13.6	13.7	16.0	13.4	16.1	16.3	13.5	15.3	---	---
Barbados	10.2	10.3	9.8	12.6	10.9	12.2	11.7	11.5	11.7	12.8	12.3	10.3
Belize	---	---	---	---	9.1	22.3	6.1	20.2	5.9	19.4	6.8	15.1
Grenada	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	27.4	30.6	26.0	32.3
Jamaica	9.2	16.2	9.3	16.7	10.3	17.8	11.0	20.0	10.1	18.1	9.9	17.8
Saint Lucia	19.5	22.0	19.2	23.3	19.4	23.6	21.3	25.5	20.9	28.4	21.3	27.4
Saint Vincent & the Grenadines	---	---	---	---	19.4	24.3	---	---	---	---	---	---
Trinidad & Tobago	5.2	7.0	3.9	6.3	4.1	6.2	3.0	4.6	2.8	4.0	---	---

Sources:

Antigua and Barbuda: 2011 Population and Housing Census-Book of Statistical Tables 1

Bahamas Statistics Department, The Labour force and its components 2012-2015. Data for month of May

Barbados: Statistical Service. Downloaded Barbados Central Bank Online Statistics Database, 05 May 2016

Belize: Statistical Institute of Belize. Rates for April of each year. Population 14 years and over

Grenada: Central Statistical Office

Jamaica: STATIN Economic and Social Survey 2010; (2013-2015) Bank of Jamaica, Jamaica in Figures 2015

Saint Lucia: Central Statistical Office, Labour Force Indicators 1994 – 2014

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines: 2012 Population and Housing Census Report

Trinidad and Tobago: Central Statistical Office, Labour Force Indicators

Apart from the negative impacts of the austerity measures are the economic and health costs associated with long term unemployment, including the loss of productivity. Prolonged unemployment can lead to the erosion of skills and is also linked to health problems such as loss of self-esteem, mental anxiety and poor cognitive performance. *“As a person’s skills deteriorate due to the lack of*

use, the probability of being hired in the future declines". For women, long term unemployment results in negative macroeconomic outcomes because, "a mother's poverty has the potential to impact early childhood development". Unemployment should therefore not be considered "a transitory problem when it persists for so long that it reduces labour productivity". (Seguino 2016, 9-10).

Maybe what could be considered a positive of the austerity measures is that many women and men have turned their unemployment situation around by taking up self-employment opportunities as an avenue for economic autonomy and empowerment, although much of this is in the informal economy.

Labour Force Segregation

The gender divide in employment persists because women lack access to decent work and face occupational segregation, defined as the separation of women and men into different occupations, and gender wage gaps. The majority of women in the Caribbean sub-region continue to be positioned in the lowest sectors of the labour market, earn lower wages than men, experience greater levels of unemployment and poverty, are under-represented in decision-making positions at the meso- and macro-levels of social and political institutions and lack real personal autonomy (Barriteau 2001, 24).

Caribbean women are concentrated in the services sector as the data in Table III shows. The data are also consistent with that found in the preliminary findings of a Global Report on Women in Tourism (UN Women & WTO 2010) where women were found to be "*concentrated in low status, low paid and precarious jobs in the tourism industry*. The Caribbean, where most of the economies are tourism-based, not surprisingly, had one of the highest proportions of women in the tourism industry who were found to be concentrated in the service (42.9 per cent), and clerical areas (67.3 per cent).

Table III – Distribution of Employed Labour Force by Industry Groups by Sex, 2000

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Country⁹

Country	Male			Female		
	Agriculture	Industry	Services	Agriculture	Industry	Services
Bahamas	8	22	69	1	6	93
Barbados	5	31	64	3	11	85
Belize	37	19	44	6	12	82
Dominica	31	24	40	14	10	72
Grenada	17	32	46	10	12	77
Jamaica	29	25	45	10	8	82
Saint Lucia	28	24	49	15	14	71
Suriname	7	29	58	3	6	89
Trinidad and Tobago	13	34	53	4	13	83

Source: The CARICOM Secretariat

The segregation patterns by industry and occupational groupings suggest a smaller range of employment opportunities for women in the labour market, which was considered a factor leading to their lower participation rate. (CDB 2013, 13)

According to the World Bank, the low returns to education in salaried work often acts as a factor which propels women towards self-employment. However it is often more than responding to the wage gap. Additional factors such as the lack of decent work opportunities in the labour market and barriers to entry also influence women's decision to become entrepreneurs. Further, the flexibility afforded by self-employment may actually outweigh earning differentials.

Women's Economic Opportunities in the Private Sector

The promotion of women entrepreneurs is increasingly “viewed as an important lever for private sector development”. (World Bank 2010, 13). Entrepreneurship is considered one of the key engines of economic growth and development and is known to contribute to a vibrant private sector. This is because entrepreneurs

stimulate broader economic growth, generate income and create job opportunities, leading to increased productivity. Another important aspect of private sector development is that entrepreneurs as innovators tend to bring knowledge and new ideas to the economy, which is an important element leading to growth and development.

This is important in the Caribbean sub-region where the private sector employs the majority of people (both employees and self-employed people) in the labour force with percentages ranging from 64 per cent of total employment in Antigua and Barbuda to 93 per cent in Barbados. The largest share of employment is provided in the services sector, with women considerably more reliant on the service industries for employment than men (IADB 2014).

The creation of employment opportunities as well as reforms in the labour markets is deemed fundamental to increasing economic growth and improving social development. Development of the private sector is therefore viewed as a priority for the majority of Caribbean countries, since it is viewed as the key to economic growth and to alleviating many of the development and social problems facing the sub-region.

Entrepreneurship: Situational Analysis of the Caribbean Sub-region

Entrepreneurship has been acknowledged as one of the critical engines of economic development, growth and sustainability. Baldacchino (2005) argues that small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) make vigorous contributions to economic growth and the creation of sustainable employment. In this respect the SDG goal 8 recognises the potential of entrepreneurship as a strategy for promoting sustainable economic growth and for providing productive employment. Target 8.3 calls for the promotion of development-oriented policies that support entrepreneurship, and innovation, and encourage the formalization and growth of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises, including through access to financial services.

The power of SMEs is recognised in the Caribbean as having the potential to make significant impacts on economic growth and development. *“As policy makers confront the challenging question of how to create employment”* to enable people to *“meet their basic needs they have increasingly endorsed the development of self-reliance through the creation of small business operations as the panacea for improving the economic marginalisation of the masses”*. (Ramkissoon-Babwah 2013, 32).

In this regard female entrepreneurs are receiving more attention from governments, international organizations and other development stakeholders who recognize the significant contribution that is being made to national economies by female entrepreneurs in terms of employment creation and poverty reduction. (ILO 2014, 2). This is supported by findings from a study conducted by Barriteau, where female entrepreneurs stated that the most significant contribution that small business made to the economy was the generation of employment and the production of much needed goods and services. (Barriteau 2001, 143).

According to the Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Commerce (Sunday Guardian 2016)¹⁰, SMEs have mushroomed in the twin island state during the last decade, numbering some 18,000 at the end of 2010, employing 200,000 persons, and contributing nearly 28 per cent to Gross Domestic Product (GDP). However, there is no disaggregation of this data to identify how many of these businesses are women-owned businesses. As Lashley and Smith (2015) state, there is a general lack of research on the types of women-owned businesses in the Caribbean sub-region.

Women, Gender and Entrepreneurship

The number of female entrepreneurs in the Caribbean sub-region is significantly lower than the number of male entrepreneurs (Lashley and Smith 2015, 39). This is because traditional gender roles are still very prevalent in Caribbean societies and they influence women's ability to fully participate in all sectors of the labour

force, including the creation of businesses. According to Lashley (2009, 33), among the major barriers to female owned enterprise development in the Caribbean sub-region are social and cultural factors, which are *"....critical in restricting women's participation and growth in the small enterprise sector. Socialization in the home and community that women's place is in the reproductive sector is further inculcated in education and in the labour market. ... These factors have led to women's enterprises being located in low growth, low revenue, low status sectors"*.

In the Caribbean, as (Lashley 2010) argues, the social values attached to entrepreneurship are very low among both men and women, therefore being *"an employee rather than being self-employed is preferred across"* the Caribbean sub-region. This low valuation is attributed to a mix of family, religious, cultural and community-related issues. As a result, entry into entrepreneurship development becomes the last resort for those persons seeking economic opportunities. This negative view and the low social valuation attached to

BOX 1 Experience of a Caribbean Female Entrepreneur

Karis* gave up her corporate job of 17 years to pursue her dream. She took a year off from work to spend time with her family before she opened her shop. "I thought, 'why am I doing all that I can to build somebody's empire successful, but I too have goals and dreams that I need to pursue', and I decided to give up my job".

Karis has her own storefront, and her client base has grown tremendously. She does not regret her decision to get out into the community and be known publicly. While some people may question why she stopped operating rent-free from home, Karis stated that if she was at home no one would walk in and order something. So the shop is a trade-off.

"It makes no sense having an idea and not living your dream. If you start your business and it fails, then you know you have the experience and can use what you learned to start over and do it better. I am proud of me. It takes a lot for someone to say, 'I am in a full-time job that is paying the bills and I am going to give that up'. Most of the time our dreams die with us, because we get very comfortable having that full time job and the security".

Karis said in the moment that she made the decision to leave the office it was just for her to live her dream and be an entrepreneur. Owning and managing her business, gives her the flexibility to be more in control, and also to spend time with her family. Yet, she acknowledged that she was new to entrepreneurship and had more to learn. "It has its challenges and it has its peak moments, but I am just happy to be doing what I have always wanted to do, which is use my talents to make other people happy and make some money while doing it".. (Adapted from Nation News, 21 September 2016. Nation Publishing Company, Barbados)

*Karis is a fictitious name.

enterprise development as an avenue for earning an income constrains women's attempts to participate in self-employment.

In terms of what propels women's entry into entrepreneurship, the World Bank identified two main forces which drive both women and men into business. The first is the need for a supplemental income and the second is a *"vision of a unique business opportunity"*. The first is described as *"push out factors"* derived from necessity and stemming from lack of opportunities in the labour market and the need to supplement household income. Many of the push out factors were more specific to females since they are related to gender issues such as *"women's traditional responsibility for family and child care, their roles as secondary wage earners and glass ceilings in the private sector"*. The second motivating force is described as *"pull in factors"* which are more likely to be related to the desire for autonomy and/or *flexibility following a life's calling, innate ability and motivation to capitalize on a business niche*. (World Bank 2010:20).

These two forces are also identified by Barriteau, where many female entrepreneurs cited unemployment – the push out factor - as the catalyst which propelled them into business development. As cited by the CDB, women in The Bahamas *"sought means of making a livelihood by increasing their engagement in informal sector activities, mainly in insecure, unskilled activity such as street vending"*, rather than continue to become discouraged in the labour force. (CDB 2013, 15). However, for some women it was the desire to have control over economic resources, together with a desire for independence – the pull in factors –(see Box VI), which motivated them to start their own businesses. (Barriteau 2001, 128)

Another one of the push out factors, namely of the need to balance caring responsibilities with income-earning activities, was also identified by Barriteau as one of the reasons why so many Caribbean women were forced to establish informal businesses, often within their homes because it provided the flexibility to

earn an income and to spend time with their children. This also reduced the costs and risks for female entrepreneurs.

The World Bank also identified a number of structural barriers faced by small and medium sized enterprises (SME) owned by women, including the fact that they do not have the same access to high quality financial services as men. Further, they are more likely than male-owned SMEs to be smaller, informal and home-based.

Financial Challenges

While the challenges faced by female entrepreneurs are many, the more critical are linked to finance, education and intra-household responsibilities in the care economy. The playing field for male and female entrepreneurs in the Caribbean sub-region is very uneven. Access to financial capital as identified earlier remains one of the crucial barriers to the growth and development of women-owned businesses, which is caused mostly by women's non-ownership of resources that could be used as collateral. Female entrepreneurs in the Barriteau study identified the unwillingness of commercial banks to lend them money. As a result, many women are less likely to finance their businesses from commercial sources, opting instead to use their personal funds or loans from family or friends. *"Even when they can get credit, women-owned businesses have less access to other financial services and products, such as insurance"* (International Trade Centre). Barriteau, in her study of women in the formal business sector however, notes that

"when women are constantly denied access to credit – even though they meet the formal requirements for obtaining it – then financial institutions and governments are shifting to women the costs of operating in the public domain of the economy...because women are seen as naturally belonging in the private sphere, there is a tendency to view their thrust into entrepreneurship as also privatized".

The policy directives identified in the standalone goal on gender which are directly aimed at the economic empowerment of women focus on “reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws (5a).

As outlined in Target 5.7 of the SDGs, governments and all key stakeholders are urged to *“undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws”*; and to adopt and strengthen *“sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels”*.

Financial institutions also need to provide the enabling environment to allow women to more readily access the necessary services in order to develop and expand their businesses. These include provision of more flexible and extended repayment periods on loans; revision of the types of assets to be used to include both tangible and intangible assets such as patents, trademarks, copyrights and trade names; the application of specialised interest rates for SMEs owned by women; and the establishment of internal systems with a targeted focus on women entrepreneurs to ensure on-going dialogue and engagement on a regular basis. (Cherie Blair Foundation for Women 2016).

The need to identify and access new sources of finance has led in recent months to the introduction of a new form of financing for women entrepreneurs in the Caribbean sub-region, spurred on by calls by heads of government to find *“innovative, inclusive and accessible financing mechanisms as well as capacity building to advance women's entrepreneurship”*¹¹.

In July 2016, the first Commonwealth-wide crowd-funding¹² initiative was launched alongside the CARICOM heads of government meeting¹³, with the

goal of leveraging crowd-funding to attract new capital flows to the sub-region and ultimately to create new jobs and drive economic growth. The FundRiseHER initiative is led by two female Caribbean entrepreneurs with inputs from the Commonwealth Businesswomen's Network. It is anticipated that this source of funds will help with the implementation of the ambitious goals of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development given the financial challenges facing Caribbean economies.

The goal will be to raise US\$1 million grant funding, through a global rewards-based crowd-funding campaign by ten participating Caribbean countries and Commonwealth member states to provide grant funding between US\$10,000 and \$25,000 for 50 women entrepreneurs.

Educational Challenges

Education can make significant contributions to overall economic growth by improving the capacity and capabilities of the workforce, which lead to higher rates of individual productivity. Strategies to promote job creation and enhance the employment skills of the population should therefore include improvements in the quality of education. The challenge is that *"most educational systems do not foster inventive thinking, communication skills, problem solving or the other competencies than can help individuals"* to start their own businesses and create their own employment opportunities.

It is not surprising that female entrepreneurs identified the lack of appropriate education as a major challenge which hindered their progress. Many cited that the present curriculum as too academic, focussed primarily on preparing students to work for others. Collaboration is therefore needed between governments, the private sector and educational institutions in order to change this situation and maximize the benefits of education. Entrepreneurial educational programmes should be developed and become part of the established curriculum of schools, colleges and universities. (Ramkissoon-Babwah 2013, 34).

In order to be successful, entrepreneurs need skills such as creativity, problem solving and communication skills. These skills are often acquired through hands-on experience – often from entrepreneurial failures – that help an individual entrepreneur to eventually succeed. Education and training programmes specifically targeted to entrepreneurs must be designed to develop these skills and provide individuals with practical education *and experiential learning that build soft skills, such as communication, social intelligence, and critical thinking, as well as hard skills like accounting and financial management.* (Global Business School Network 2013, 6-7).

More educational programmes are therefore required *“to increase the social acceptance of self-employment, expand females' involvement in sectors with growth potential and improve access to developmental resources”.* (infoDev 2015, 59).

SECTION IV

Summary and Conclusions

The analysis in this paper leads to a number of conclusions and recommendations, which could assist governments and other stakeholders to increase economic opportunities for both females and males in pursuance of the realization of the 2030 Agenda, particularly the economic empowerment of Caribbean women through their participation in decent work and entrepreneurship.

It is critical that women are provided with equitable access to productive employment and to income earning opportunities that support their empowerment through the necessary enabling frameworks. For example, self-employment and entrepreneurship should be supported with relevant policies

and programmes to create, support and mentorship, including the facilitation of access to credit and the provision of financial services to assist in the development of micro and small businesses.

The realization of the economic empowerment of women in the Caribbean can become a reality if Caribbean governments together with other major stakeholders take the necessary actions to ensure that gender is mainstreamed across all of the 17 SDG goals and targets in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. This will require that there is systematic mainstreaming of a gender perspective into national development planning, while implementation of the 2030 Agenda, as mentioned in the introduction, is given greater and more visible prominence. The advancement of women's economic empowerment will have to take a central place in the long term development plans of Caribbean governments, alongside specific gender policies and programmes designed to address issues of equity and to reflect the needs of women and girls in their planning and budgeting:

Where there is gender blindness in policy formulation, one of two problems is likely to occur. Firstly, women are not recognised as important in the development process, and simply not included at the level of policy formulation. Secondly, development policy, even when aware of the important role women play in the development process, because of certain assumptions, often still "misses" women, and consequently fails to develop coherently formulated gender policy. (Moser 1993, 6-7).

Governments of the sub-region will therefore need to design enabling policies and implement economic, social and environmental programmes aimed at improving and advancing the economic status of women. These policies, projects and programmes, however, must be evidence-based and this paper seeks to contribute to this evidence base.

The achievement of the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development on the elimination of extreme poverty and the promotion of shared prosperity will only be attained if income-earning opportunities for women are increased

through their increased participation in the labour force and in entrepreneurship, in addition to sustained improvements in their productive assets. (World Bank Group 2015, 41).

Finally, the dearth of statistical data within the sub-region must be aggressively addressed. The continued lack of statistical data on gender issues, including economic and social issues, results in the limited availability of timely and accurate information which is urgently needed to better inform policies and programmes to accelerate growth in the area of entrepreneurship for women. The limited availability of timely statistical data, particularly gender statistics, is another major challenge to facilitating growth in Caribbean economies and, by extension, the inclusion of women in the economy. This is a major stumbling block to the development of evidence-based policy making and strategic planning. In this respect, action needs to be taken to properly measure and value unpaid work in the Caribbean, because it is very difficult to improve what is not measured. The same principle also applies to other areas, such as improved data on the services sector as an avenue for the economic empowerment of women.

As Bandele argues, there is a crucial need for a gender-disaggregated data revolution in the area of gender equality and equity to inform policy positions and donor aid priorities.

"There is a clear disjuncture between the global community's declaration of new SDGs, as part of the post-2015 development framework, and the dearth of gender disaggregated data. If such data had been available, it could have better informed the SDGs and indeed their ongoing implementation. The absence of the requisite gender disaggregated data across all countries, particularly SIDS and developing economies, will throw into question the ability of governments to achieve these targets". (Bandele 2016 9-10).

This dearth of data may actually serve to delay achievement of the SDGs in the Caribbean. The SDGs therefore provide Caribbean governments with the impetus needed to make greater investments in the timely collection of data, and more crucially in the sex dis-aggregation of data to allow for gender analysis, by strengthening national capacities to systematically collect and analyse gender statistics to address the ongoing critical gaps in data.

Care policies – to reduce the burden of household work on women and allow them to participate in more economic activities, need to become a reality in the Caribbean. In this respect, there will have to be a transformation in the Caribbean in the formulation and interpretation of the role of economic policies, which is currently viewed primarily as the promotion of economic growth, as well as social policies, which are *“designed to address the ‘casualties’ by redressing poverty and disadvantage and reducing inequality”*. Broader goals such as gender equality and social justice can also be achieved by more strategically designed transformative macroeconomic policies. *“Conversely, well-designed social policies can enhance macroeconomic growth ... through redistributive measures that increase employment, productivity and aggregate demand”*. (UN WOMEN 2015, 3).

List of Abbreviations

BPfA	Beijing Platform for Action
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CDB	Caribbean Development Bank
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CGA	Country Gender Assessment
CPA	Country Poverty Assessment
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council
GE	Gender Equality
GEM	Gender Empowerment Measure
GDI	Gender Development Index
HDI	Human Development Index
HDR	Human Development Report
ILO	International Labour Organization
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NCD	Non Communicable Disease
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NWM	National Women's Machinery
OECD	Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development
SAPs	Structural Adjustment Programmes
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SIDS	Small Islands Developing States
SMEs	Small and Medium Size Enterprises
UWI	University of the West Indies

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of organizations which work on women's rights, sustainable development and environment themes. The role of Women's Major Group is to assure effective public participation of women's non-governmental groups in the United Nations policy processes on sustainable development.)

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¹ **Gender:** refers to the social attributes, differences and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, throughout the life cycle. These attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially constructed and are learned through socialization processes, and though deeply rooted in every culture, they are changeable overtime. "Gender", along with class, race, age, ethnicity, poverty, and other social factors, determines the roles, power and resources for women, men, boys and girls in any culture. Gender determines what is expected, allowed and valued in a woman or a man in a given context. In most societies there are differences and inequalities between women and men in responsibilities assigned, activities undertaken, access to and control over resources, as well as decision-making opportunities. Gender is part of the broader socio-cultural context. Historically, attention to gender relations has been driven by the need to address women's needs and circumstances, as they are typically more disadvantaged than men. Increasingly, however, the need to know more about the disadvantages men and boys can face due to gender relations is recognised. OSAGI.

² **Gender equality** is defined as equality between women and men; refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same but that women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, recognizing the diversity of different groups of women and men. Gender equality is not a women's issue but should concern and fully engage men as well as women. Equality between women and men is seen both as a human rights issue and as a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable people-centred development. (United Nations, Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues, OSAGI).

³ CARICOM Member States signalled their commitment to the Decent Work Agenda during various Meetings of the Council for Human and Social Development (COHSOD) in the period 2000-2011.

⁴ Data was not available for Antigua and Barbuda or for St. Kitts and Nevis.

⁵ Time poverty – Women are often described as "time poor". Due to the gender division of labour in the family prevailing in many countries, women's responsibility for unpaid household labour leaves only few hours daily for engaging in work outside the household (UNIFEM, 2005). The situation is further aggravated in cases where women are the sole head of household. Women's ability to free up time depends to a great extent on the availability of service and infrastructure. (OECD, 2009: 137).

⁶ The Social Security Act provides for twelve weeks maternity leave. Males employed in the public sector are entitled to paternity leave (pursuant to an agreement between the main trade union and the government signed in December 2008).

⁷ Barbados Statistical Service.

⁸ Caribbean countries such as Barbados, Jamaica and Saint Lucia produce periodic Labour Force Information

⁹ Data was not available for Antigua and Barbuda; Guyana; Montserrat; St. Kitts and Nevis or St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

¹⁰ The Power of the SMEs, *Trinidad Sunday Guardian*, April 24, 2016. www.guardian.co.tt

¹¹ Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, November 2013, Colombo, Sri Lanka.

¹² **Crowdfunding** (a form of [crowdsourcing](#)) is the practice of funding a project or venture by raising monetary contributions from a large number of people, today often performed via [internet](#)-mediated registries, but the concept can also be executed through mail-order subscriptions, benefit events, and other methods. Crowdfunding is a form of [alternative finance](#), which has emerged outside of the traditional financial system. The crowdfunding model is based on three types of actors: the project initiator who proposes the idea and/or project to be funded; individuals or groups who support the idea; and a moderating organization (the "platform") that brings the parties together to launch the idea. Accessed on 12 July 2016 from: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crowdfunding#Benefits_and_risks FundRiseHER is created and powered by pitchandchoose.com, the crowd funding platform for the Caribbean subregion. It is being piloted in the Caribbean with campaigns commencing in September 2016.

¹³ CARICOM Heads of Government Meeting, July 2016, Georgetown Guyana



Reflections on American Philanthropy in the Caribbean and the Influential Role of Caribbean Women

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Abstract

Women's programmes in the Caribbean supported by private American foundations turned upside down the usual working relations between grantor and grantee. By drawing together the historical records of the foundations active in the region with my personal programmatic experiences, in this article I argue that the focus on women in the mid-1970s emerged as a foundation priority in response to societal changes in the United States and global discussions with and led by developing countries. These changes, not heretofore highlighted, brought significant actors from the region to the attention of foundation staff and led to their influential programme-shaping roles. The main premise of my paper is that starting in the mid-1970s and continuing for nearly 20 years, these actors, primarily women scholars and activists, played a significant role in shaping foundation priorities and programmes.

In the introduction I briefly discuss the early twentieth century history of the first two foundations active in the region, the Rockefeller Foundation and Carnegie Corporation of New York. The core of the article focuses on these two American foundations, Carnegie Corporation and the Ford Foundation that in the second half of the century supported programmes in the Caribbean related to women in development. I conclude with recommendations for ways to deepen the understanding of this history and make it accessible for scholars, philanthropic practitioners and policymakers.

Keywords: women in development, American foundations, world conferences, Women and Development Unit (WAND), The University of the West Indies (UWI), Peggy Antrobus, Joycelin Massiah, Lucille Mair, Nita Barrow, Rockefeller Foundation, Carnegie Corporation of New York, Ford Foundation

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Premises of the Paper

The pathways that Caribbean women have traditionally forged toward achieving more equitable social, economic and political developments were only recognized in the late 1970s by American grant-making foundations, even though they had long been active in the region. In this article, I argue that only following sea changes in domestic and international concerns for social justice in the late 1960s and 1970s did foundation officers hear more distinctly the voices of Caribbean women, with resulting shifts in programmatic strategies. The confluence of these changing conditions, along with new institutional leadership and a decline in assets, resulted in the restructuring of foundation programmes in the Caribbean and elsewhere to support initiatives related to women in development.

As background, in the first section of the paper I introduce the earliest two American foundations working in the Caribbean region, the Rockefeller Foundation and Carnegie Corporation of New York. After World War II, other foundations followed their lead in the region. To amplify my thesis, I discuss the initial efforts of the Ford Foundation, the largest and, eventually, the most active institution concerned with programmes in the Caribbean related to women in development.¹

Next, I argue that in the mid-1970s, leadership changes at the Ford Foundation and Carnegie Corporation along with shifts in global and domestic contexts made these organizations more responsive to concerns articulated by women from the Caribbean in particular, and enabled them to guide foundation staff members in distinctive ways. Because the programme outcomes are familiar to the readers of this journal, I only discuss illustrative examples from their reoriented strategies over the following twenty years.

I write this article from the perspective of a scholar and practitioner of philanthropy, not as a scholar of women's issues or of development in the Caribbean. I have benefited considerably from the insightful articles of Bridget

Brereton and Ellie McDonald and others mentioned in sections below (Brereton 2013; McDonald 2016). These two authors, in particular, make compelling arguments for the study of history in order to understand present conditions and guide future actions. They also highlight the important role of historical archives and oral history in writing about contemporary issues. Their work informs my concluding suggestion about an approach to deepen historical research on American foundations in the region and build on that knowledge to inform both scholarship and local and external philanthropic efforts.

The Beginnings of American Foundation Support for Caribbean-Based Programmes

Carnegie Corporation of New York (CCNY) and the Rockefeller Foundation (RF) were the first two American foundations to engage in grant-making in the Caribbean. CCNY, established in 1911, was geographically restricted to work in the United States and in the British Commonwealth and Dominions by its founder, Scottish-born Andrew Carnegie. RF, established in 1913, had no such geographic restrictions; it could engage in grant-making anywhere in the world (Rockefeller Archive Center (RAC) 2013; Rosenfield 2014). The narrative of their activities in the Caribbean began almost simultaneously with their founding. While contextual challenges such as World War I, the Great Depression, and World War II, of course, constrained grant-making domestically and internationally, the foundations' actions primarily responded to opportunities that contributed toward meeting their institutional missions, not necessarily regional or local priorities.

However, in those earliest years, one external context that the foundations regularly tapped into was colonial governance. Both recognized, for example, that they could not work in the colonies of the British Empire without approval from the Colonial Office in England. In the case of RF, their initial international efforts related to health, one of their main areas of overall concern, with a concentration on sanitation and hookworm control. As work was getting underway in 1913, the lead programme staff member, Wickliffe Rose, received "a cordial invitation from the Colonial authorities to visit the tropical colonies of

Great Britain, with a view to the inauguration of the work under the auspices of the several local governments." Following more visits to London and trips throughout the colonies, the report further notes that, "It was agreed that the Commission's first work in a foreign country should be in the British West Indies" (Rockefeller Foundation 1913-1914, 15). The Foundation's first overseas hookworm treatment programme began in British Guiana. (RAC 2013).

Not only did RF hope to achieve successful disease control and sanitation improvements in all countries where they were involved, but, as explicitly explained in the *1920 Annual Report*, staff also aimed "to create popular sentiment in support of public health, to increase appropriations for health purposes, and to promote the development of permanent agencies for the control of disease, the cultivation of hygiene as a science, and the training of men for public health service" (Rockefeller Foundation 1920, 86-87). The early RF international health staff clearly understood the components of a successful health and development programme. They continued with these Caribbean initiatives throughout the next two decades.

Early philanthropic efforts of Andrew Carnegie, before he established CCNY, included support for free public libraries. He considered access to knowledge through libraries as one of the most important ways to tackle a prominent root cause of poverty, the lack of access to formal education. Before establishing CCNY and before RF was founded, Carnegie had funded libraries in the Caribbean. Following his criteria, the local community had to request support and provide matching funds for library maintenance. In 1903, the criteria were met by Barbados and Dominica. Like the Rockefeller foray into public health in the Caribbean, the Carnegie Free Library of Barbados was "the first Carnegie Library built outside of Great Britain and North America" (Little Known 2013). The representative of the British Empire, the governor, would usually make the request. CCNY continued support for library programmes in the Caribbean during the interwar years.

During these years, both foundations expanded their work in the Caribbean to include Puerto Rico; RF for malaria control and CCNY for libraries. Both also continued to support projects in British Guiana, which Frederick Keppel, CCNY president from 1923-1941, described as one of the poorest in the colonies in the Empire (Rosenfield 2014, 133). In 1932, CCNY made its first grant in support of Caribbean women, providing \$70,000 to establish a women's Trade Centre in Georgetown, British Guiana (McAlmont 2006). The next one followed forty-five years later.

At the end of World War II, RF and CCNY actively engaged in grant-making that would support peaceful developments in regions where decolonization and independence movements were underway. The Caribbean was no exception. Both foundations, for example, provided support for the University of the West Indies (UWI), CCNY when it was established as a college in 1948 and RF only a few years later in the mid-1950s. CCNY's initial focus was to strengthen capacity in higher education and teacher training; RF's, to strengthen research and training in science and medicine. Soon both were also funding the Institute for Social and Economic Research. They continued to expand their grant-making to the University but without specifically including women in the programmes.

By the late 1950s, RF and CCNY were not the only two American foundations active in the region. The Ford Foundation (FF), founded in 1936 as a domestic foundation, expanded in 1950 to encompass a broad-based international programme (Rosenfield and Wimpee 2015). Like RF, FF had no geographic constraints on its scope for action. In 1959, following its establishment of overseas programmes in South Asia, the Near East, Asia and Africa, FF entered Latin America and the Caribbean as its last major geographic area of attention in that era. Almost immediately, FF's efforts greatly dominated the work of the older foundations.

Ford Foundation (FF) Enters the Caribbean Region

While there is no published history of FF's programmes in the Caribbean,

research into its extensive archives yields a considerable amount of source material (grant-related files; staff and consultant assessments; meeting reports; internal memos; even oral histories by some of the early key individuals). Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to relate the detailed history, in order to set the stage for the work on women in development, I will briefly review the rationale for its philanthropic work in the Caribbean and highlight the recommendations that led to continued attention to the region.

As was usually the case, FF initiated its work in a new geographic area with a detailed review of the opportunities and limitations. For the Caribbean review, they hired American historian Richard Morse, based at the University of Puerto Rico and founder of its Institute of Caribbean Studies, and later a founder of the Caribbean Studies Association (Morse 1959).

Morse provided the strategic rationale for the work in the region, especially noting the importance of the transition in many areas from colony to independent country. He wrote about themes that resonated throughout FF's work in the region over the following decades: proximity to and commonalities with the United States; diversity of people, languages, and socio-economic and political conditions; wide varieties of statesmanlike leadership at different levels throughout the societies; and challenges of cooperation across the region balanced by the potential for comparative work. He advised that "in the mid-20th century, it is clear that the dependencies and nations of the Caribbean arc...are entering an era of political autonomy and cultural self-awareness under the impetus of vigorous local leadership" (Morse 1959, 4). He recommended that "For strategic reasons, therefore, if not for historical and traditional ones, it would seem justifiable to include the whole Caribbean area within a development program for Latin America" (Morse 1959, 7). The president and the board were persuaded to support programmes in agriculture, education, social sciences and the humanities, science and technology and population.

Over the next twenty years, the programme areas supported remained fairly consistent. FF expended more than \$25 million throughout the region, including in Puerto Rico and in American universities working with their counterparts in the Caribbean (Shuman undated).

When McGeorge Bundy assumed the FF presidency in 1966 (he served until 1979), he introduced a series of self-studies of the prior grant programmes to determine new directions. The Caribbean was the subject of regular reviews beyond the first self-study in 1966; two more reports were prepared in 1972 and 1973/1975. With the appointment of Franklin Thomas as the foundation's new president in 1979 (serving until 1996), several additional reviews of work in the Caribbean were undertaken in 1981, 1982, 1986, 1989, 1992/93, and 1994 (Hilliard 1966; Ford Foundation (FF) 1972; Caribbean Task Force 1973/1975; Shuman undated; FF 1982a; FF 1986; FF 1989; FF 1992/93; FF 1994; Schnepel 1994).

Echoing Morse, the reports elaborated on the rationale for maintaining a programme in the Caribbean: the region's wide-ranging diversity; (usually but not always) excellent leadership; and distinctive proximity to the United States, resulting in the extensive migration linking the two regions. For Ford staff, the first two characteristics indicated the likelihood of achieving and sustaining success; the third gave the region special resonance for an American-based foundation. The 1966 and 1970s reports, for example, highlighted the resulting successes in agriculture, population, and social sciences. The combination would justify the arguments for support, even though other problematic issues were also raised: economic fragmentation, political instability or lack of cooperation across the island states. Despite the recommendations to continue work in the region, the reports often ended by commenting that if budgetary pressures became too great or FF leadership interest in the region did not increase, the work in the Caribbean could be terminated. That is, staff members were concerned that the region might not be considered significant enough in relation to other geographic areas or priorities. If FF leadership chose to continue the programme, however, staff members often recommended that regional

specialists needed to be hired. In this era, the programmes continued but specialists were never hired.

The FF formed the Caribbean Task Force in January 1973 to review the work and recommend next steps.. The Task Force comprised staff members whose responsibilities reflected the oft-highlighted linkages between the United States and the Caribbean region. They were drawn from the U.S.-focused National Affairs and Education and Research Programs, as well as from the International Division. The Task Force recommended a series of options for continuing the work that helped shape new programme approaches proposed in a 1975 memo prepared by James Gardner, programme officer responsible for the work in the Caribbean, to the head of Latin America and the Caribbean office, William D. Carmichael (Gardner 1975).

Gardner recommended narrowing the programme focus in its three main fields of activity—agriculture, population and development management planning—to "capacity building" projects and "exemplary projects." He emphasized that his plans were "(B)uttressed by the momentum of the Caribbean Task Force" (Gardner 1975, 2). Capacity building would aim to strengthen "development of institutional, human, community and conceptual resources in the region," including strengthening of networks across institutions, fellowships and travel grants. Exemplary projects, he suggested, could address: "the Caribbean State;" "Race, Culture, and Politics in the Caribbean;" and "Movement of Caribbean peoples." He saw these as having "overriding trans-regional and international importance," requiring focused research and engagement with policy. While he briefly discussed reproductive biology and "sex roles," nowhere in his seven-page memo is there an explicit discussion of women in development or of gender (Gardner 1975, 3-4).

At this time, in fact, no American foundation was explicitly working on women in the Caribbean. That would change over the following year.

American Foundation Focus on Women and Development in the Caribbean: Rationales, Results, and Reflection

Before discussing FF and CCNY's women in development activities, I want to elucidate my argument about the enabling factors that led to these new activities. Additionally, I want to emphasize that this article draws on issues identified in the various archival documents prepared by key actors at the time. It also draws on my own experiences as a programme officer and participant in comparable decision-making at CCNY, as well as my direct participation in some of the international activities. I want to note, however, that the discussion below would benefit from more in-depth primary and secondary research, a topic I return to in the concluding section.

The first enabling factor is a result of changes in the U.S. domestic context that facilitated the foundations' engagement with women's issues. The second relates to the radical changes in the international context that gave prominence to new ideas about development and new leading players from developing countries. Caribbean intellectuals and activists, men and women, were often at the forefront of these changes.

Factor 1. The changing U.S. domestic context in the 1960s influences foundation policies

The first contextual change relates to U.S. and internal foundation conditions. U.S. civil rights legislation in the 1960s, along with civil rights activism and the reinvigorated women's movement, provided the impetus (and the internal permission) to fund more action-oriented projects, including ones that were riskier and more wide ranging (Ferguson 2013; Wimpee 2016). This began to happen in a significant way when, near the end of the 1960s, both FF and CCNY elected new presidents, McGeorge Bundy, referred to earlier, and Alan Pifer, formally installed as CCNY president in 1967 (he served until 1982). Both endorsed grant-making related to civil rights; they wrote about and acted on promoting social justice. Moreover, at this time, as indicated above, both institutions began to shift their traditional focus on higher education toward

increased support for non-governmental organizations, including those aimed at advancing public policy advocacy and civil rights litigation. The civil rights and social justice thrusts combined with new foundation leadership opened the door to programmes about women and their rights.

Changes at FF

In September, 1972, FF's leaders walked through that opened door. Yet another task force was created, this one to examine, as they put it, "The Ford Foundation's Program in the Changing Role of Women." The Task Force's charge was to assess the growing women's movement and to determine how best FF could respond with regard to women's needs, including how women's changing roles in society might affect the family (Ford Foundation, 1973). The Task Force comprised twelve members (nine women and three men), from all levels of the foundation (two vice presidents, six programme officers, a staff assistant, the assistant treasurer and the assistant general counsel). Although primarily reviewing the situation of American women in meetings with American scholars, activists and leaders, they also met with one key international advisor, Dr. Alva Myrdal, the Swedish scholar and politician. Overseas staff provided additional input from discussions with women in their settings. The Task Force reviewed the slightly more than \$2.5 million worth of grants that had been made since 1960 to promote women's equal opportunity. Of the thirty-five projects and fellowships relating to women, none was made directly to an overseas institution or individual.

The Task Force report to the Trustees, nonetheless, highlighted international issues, particularly related to participation of women in society and their access to education. The report also pointed out the differences in the foundation's grant-making: for some time, its domestic programmes had been allocating resources for enhancing women's opportunities, whereas none had been allocated by the international division. Only the separate Population Program had supported projects related to "the interrelationships between the full social participation of women and fertility control" (Ford Foundation 1973, C-7). Despite recognizing the gap in FF's programming, they advised proceeding with caution

outside of the United States, fearing they would step on culturally sensitive toes.

Before making any grant recommendations, the Task Force first recommended that FF itself institute a vigorous internal affirmative action programme. It was not that they necessarily anticipated that women programme officers would be more open to funding women's activities, [A side note: one such officer effectively advocated for the Foundation to provide equal pay for women staff members (The LAFF Society 2009)]. They saw the ethical importance of consistency with their promoting affirmative action in their grantee institutions and activities. They recognized that they needed to act on the same concern in their own institution.

Their programmatic recommendations included increasing the opportunities for women in grants and fellowships; focusing on the multiple dimensions of women's economic role through programmes "supported by the National Affairs, Education and Research, and International Divisions"; and maintaining "a standing committee of staff from the several divisions" to ensure that FF give sufficient attention to the "newly emerging needs of women"(Ford Foundation March 1973, 23-24). This Task Force led to a wide range of programmes focused on women and increasing opportunities for women, first in the United States and then slowly expanding around the world. Four years following the Trustee review of the Task Force, the focus on women in the Caribbean began to feature in FF's portfolio, as discussed further below.

Changes at CCNY

In the case of CCNY, since the 1920s support for women had been scattered throughout the domestic programme and international travel grants, and, for the most part, specifically related to education. As at FF, however, the overseas programme, then called the Commonwealth Program, had not incorporated any of the social justice concerns that permeated domestic grant-making in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Pifer, like Bundy, was also tackling a need to refresh programmes while making cuts due to the economic downturns of the 1970s. In 1974, he asked the Trustees to undertake an extensive review of the Commonwealth Program. The Trustees established a review committee with a completely open-ended charge. They could keep the programme the same, change it drastically, or recommend ending it. They had the resources to commission historical studies and undertake site visits; they also paid close attention to contemporary global concerns.

As Pifer reported to CCNY staff in 1975, the Trustees recommended bringing to a close the long-term undertakings in higher education, teacher training and child development despite their internationally recognized successes. They recommended reorienting the programme from the widespread work in tropical Africa and elsewhere in the Commonwealth world to focus more intently on southern Africa, the Caribbean and the South Pacific. Pifer further reported on their recommendation that the university-based educational development and research activities be greatly reduced and support increased for "smaller, facilitative grants for a wider range of activities in such fields as leadership development, social planning, regional and international communication, indigenous culture, and others" (Rosenfield 2014, 295-296).

The two main themes they endorsed reflected the social justice and civil rights perspectives. CCNY should: (1) tackle more energetically the egregious situation with apartheid in southern Africa; and (2) initiate a new programme thrust on "a brand-new topic...the promotion of women in development." They also urged that in each of the two areas, CCNY staff identify more effective ways to enhance communications about development to American policymakers and the public (Rosenfield 2014, 295-296).

The Implications for Both Institutions

By 1975, I argue that for both FF and CCNY, the fortuitous combination of engagement with the rights-oriented domestic situation, in-depth reviews of international conditions and considerably reduced financial assets, further

opened their doors to respond positively to the new agenda for women defined by new (to them) actors in the international community.

Factor 2. The 1970s: New Voices and New Issues from Developing Countries Transformed International Debates and Actions

Starting in 1968, leaders, scholars and activists from both developing and developed countries who were concerned about the state of human development began to meet periodically under the auspices of different international organization. Their aim was to move forward international and local actions on social, economic and governance issues within developing countries and transnationally. At this time, the international community turned to the creation of multi-national commissions as a way of addressing a multitude of global problems. These commissions would produce reports of their deliberations, disseminate them widely and, often, prepare them as background for UN-sponsored conferences bringing together participants from national governments and non-governmental organizations.

Beginning in 1968, Lester Pearson, Nobel Laureate and former prime minister of Canada, formed the Pearson Commission on International Development, with funding from the World Bank to examine its work. The Commission's deliberations resulted in *Partners in Development*, a report that set the standard for many to follow (Pearson Report 1969). In the years after the report was issued and continuing until the present day, international commissions and UN conferences have initiated and sustained discussions on global concerns related to the environment, population, international development, culture, water supply and sanitation, humanitarian issues, global governance, human security and other themes (Lapeyre 2004).

The issues raised by these global, developing country-focused conferences, often receiving considerable press coverage, helped define new agendas for FF and CCNY, and enabled staff members to hear from people unfamiliar to them from their earlier efforts. Specifically, for this paper, I contend the turning point for

FF and CCNY that led to programmes on women in development in the Caribbean and other developing countries was the first World Conference on Women, held in the summer of 1975 in Mexico City. With participation from governments and nongovernmental organizations, the deliberations resulted in the first World Plan of Action and guidelines for a decade devoted to the advancement of women. Now there was an action agenda that could provide the template against which FF and CCNY could develop and assess their own programmes in this new area of women in development (UN Women undated).

Peggy Antrobus, the Grenada-born scholar, author and feminist activist, is one of the pioneering global leaders on women's issues. Well-known to the readers of this journal, Antrobus has published an outstanding analysis of the global women's movement, including the impacts of the UN Conferences on Women (Antrobus 2004). She provides additional personal perspectives in a 2007 interview with Michelle Rowley, one of the editors of this special issue (Rowley 2007) on the effects of the 1980 World Conference on Women, held in Copenhagen, where the pioneering scholar on women in the Caribbean, Ambassador Lucille Mair, served as Secretary-General. Antrobus also referred to the next World Conference on Women, held in 1985 in Nairobi, where the equally distinguished and influential Dame Nita Barrow, also from the Caribbean, chaired the NGO Forum (Rowley 2007, 70). In addition, these conferences and subsequent gatherings engaged staff members from FF and CCNY, and increasingly other foundations, enlarging the influence of those who were designing and implementing the local and international agendas for action with those who were eager to find ways to support it.

The Programmatic Response: What did the foundations actually do?

How did they do it? What happened?

Both FF and CCNY archival records are replete with material from their efforts in the Caribbean. The records, especially the analytical recommendations for grant action in the grant files and complementary reports and memos, indicate ways the international agenda and domestic policy changes influenced

programmes. These documents also reveal ways the officers within and across foundations were in touch with each other and benefited from sharing knowledge.

My central argument is that these developments provided the preconditions that enabled the women scholars and activists from the Caribbean to help shape not only global action plans for the international community but also new grant-making activities at the foundations. Despite the historical experiences of both foundations in the region, it was only following site visits to the region and participation at the world conferences, when programme staff encountered the leading Caribbean scholars and activists of the time, such as those noted above, that they began to develop new programmes to address concerns about women.

To reiterate, my reasoning is based on the archival evidence that I reviewed, as well as my experience working on these issues in the late 1980s and 1990s. For so many years foundation staff were actively working on and in the Caribbean, identifying and supporting grants on issues closely related to the concerns about women, such as the forces affecting migration and racism as well as economic and educational inequities in the region. With the increasing attention to women's issues in the U.S. paralleling in time the Caribbean work, it is surprising that they did not have the programmatic foresight to identify women's issues as a key area for enlarging and deepening their grant-making in the region. This is yet another reason why I argue that for the area of women in development, even with the internal changes in both institutions, FF and CCNY programme staff only moved forward with the Caribbean women's programme after they had heard and learned from the knowledgeable actors from the region. These interlocutors then helped frame the rationale and the opportunities for them.

While today American foundation programme staff may develop their programmes by listening to and learning from local actors, in the 1970s, foundation staff did not ordinarily design their program strategies around the

ideas and plans suggested by the potential grantees. The relationship between these local actors and foundation staff was qualitatively different.

Massiah emphatically reinforces this point:

In the context of the present project the main issues we wanted donors to consider were:

- we wanted to do the work ourselves;
- we wanted to fashion our own conceptual framework; and
- we wanted to be judged by the record of achievements of the host Institute and not by the donors' experience of other regions.

We were extremely fortunate to obtain major support from donors who were willing to consider these terms. Assistance was made available for every stage of the project by agencies from both within and outside of the region" (Massiah 1982, 19).

To reinforce my arguments, in the following pages, I discuss how FF and CCNY programmes in support of Caribbean women in development mirrored each other in the 1970s and 1980s, and then how and why they began to differ.

The grants made by the foundations are fairly well known and have been written about elsewhere, including in this journal. For example, the December 2016 *Caribbean Review of Gender Studies* is a testament to the legacy of the pioneering Caribbean women scholars and activists who promoted the work on and by women in the Caribbean region and whose voices were heard loud and clear by the staff in these two foundations (Bean and Sukhu 2016). In their introduction, Dalia Bean and Raquel Sukhu, issue coeditors, illustrate the impact of the vision on the region and beyond of Peggy Antrobus, first as the effective head of the Jamaica Women's Bureau; Joycelin Massiah, leading light of UWI's Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER) at The UWI; Lucille Mair, a pioneering scholar on women's issues, recognized as well for her diplomatic acumen; and others in the 1970s such as Nita Barrow, courageous in her tackling

of conflict issues through the World Council of Churches and persistent advocate for women's health. The papers and the earlier work referred to all contribute to understanding how the work on Caribbean women in development evolved at FF and CCNY.

In 1976, CCNY jump-started its programmatic work by hiring Kristin Anderson from the Ford Foundation. There, she had worked on related communication and other development issues. At CCNY, she was responsible for developing grants aimed at "improving conditions for women, including networks to bring women scholars together to develop targeted research and major international conferences on the theme" (Rosenfield 2014, 309). Hiring a staff member away from another foundation was a relatively rare action in those days. As evidence of the close working relationship between the two foundations, in this instance, instead of leading to antagonism or competition between them, Anderson's appointment facilitated communication and complementary programming.

As further evidence, both in the Caribbean and on the African continent, starting with the efforts of Anderson, CCNY and FF's activities related to strengthening the role of women in development were either jointly or sequentially funded by one or the other foundation. This cooperation persisted even with changing staff throughout the 1980s and the 1990s, and into the twenty-first century. In 1977 and 1978, responding particularly to the initiatives of Antrobus and Massiah, both foundations provided funding for the Jamaica Women's Bureau and its grassroots programming (Germain 1978, 6; Rosenfield 2014, 312). Similarly, CCNY supported communications activities of the Women's Bureau of the Government of Belize and research and training programmes for women through for the women's desk in the Commonwealth of Dominica.

CCNY also supported a 1977 networking meeting on issues confronting women in the region that resulted in the establishment in 1978 of the breakthrough extramural organization, headed by Peggy Antrobus, known as the Women and Development Unit (WAND), based at The University of the West Indies in

Barbados. Although CCNY was the first donor, FF soon participated (The University of the West Indies 2004-2014). Illustrating the influential role of Antrobus and her colleagues, both foundations responded regularly to their ideas and initiatives (Heisler 1987, 5-11; Rosenfield 2014, 311). Both were committed to funding WAND's plans for regional networking, grassroots programmes, training, research and convenings, as well as requests for technical assistance such as to enhance evaluation activities and to identify other donors.

FF also funded WAND's documentation and outreach efforts and all that this entailed, including training materials, curriculum development and teaching and training programmes related to a wide range of issues associated with promoting women in development. CCNY continued to fund WAND throughout the 1980s and to work with staff there until the Caribbean programme came to a close in 1994. FF worked with WAND for over twenty years, through leadership and programmatic changes in both institutions. FF and CCNY were also eager to back Antrobus's efforts to expand WAND's donor base. Soon other foundations and agencies also became committed to funding its efforts.

Responding to conversations with Antrobus and Massiah, as noted above, FF and CCNY also supported a two-year project at the ISER to review issues on women in the Caribbean, the "Women in the Caribbean Project." (Ford Foundation 1982b). Both FF and CCNY staff participated in different meetings of the project and acted positively to address the concerns identified by Massiah and her colleagues. They emphasized "the general neglect of women's issues within the official curriculum of the University," despite "the impact, over several years, of the ISER 'Women in the Caribbean' research project and of the more action-oriented activities carried out by the University's Women and Development Unit (WAND)" (Puryear/McClure 1983, 2).

In a recommendation for grant action to the Board of Trustees, FF staff members highlighted the fact that, "both projects have increased knowledge and awareness of the problems women face in the Caribbean, and both have been

sufficiently successful to draw the attention of a wide variety of university faculty members" (Puryear/McClure 1983, 2). Following the discussions with Massiah and her colleagues, they also pointed out that despite the successes with the research and action projects, the university had not opened up its curriculum in a significant way to focus on women's studies.

FF then financed a meeting convened by WAND and ISER to bring together faculty from the three UWI campuses, in Jamaica, Barbados and Trinidad, with other Caribbean universities from Guyana, St. Vincent and even the Caribbean Examinations Council. The participants reviewed experiences in other regions, including other parts of the Caribbean and Latin America, and developed an action plan for moving forward on each of the three campuses. With support from university leadership, they launched the secretariat in 1983. FF provided a modest grant for the secretariat and, in 1985, provided another one to establish the Women and Development curriculum on the three UWI campuses. They also responded positively to the request for a regional coordinator. All realized they needed one significant coordinator to provide intellectual and persuasive oversight for this initiative. Not surprisingly, they asked Ambassador Mair to take on this task, which she did (Kubisch 1985, 2). FF provided support over the next ten years.

In 2016, Massiah and her colleagues, Barbara Bailey and Elsie Leo-Rhynie, published *The UWI Gender Journey*, which details the dedicated efforts behind this story (Massiah, Leo-Rhynie and Bailey 2016). Their insightful narrative shines a light on how the key players effectively influenced foundation grant-making.

At FF, the 1980s work in the Caribbean, much like the efforts in the late 1960s and 1970s, was subject to extensive reviews that revisited the concerns raised in those earlier reports, including the diversity and fragmentation in the region, limited high-level attention within FF and lack of staff expertise. But they also identified the same opportunities, namely, strong leadership, promising opportunities for comparative work, in-depth expertise in social and economic

development and the ever present "interpenetration" between Caribbean countries and the U.S. With positive assessments, the work with WAND and ISER continued but new dimensions, albeit still related to supporting improvements in women's lives, began to take on greater prominence in FF's programmes.

When Franklin Thomas became FF's president in 1979, he instituted a reorganization of the programmes around several themes where women featured in prominent ways but were not the main component of the programme: urban poverty and the disadvantaged; rural poverty and resources; and human rights and social justice. The latter area was becoming increasingly prominent on the international and domestic agendas as well as the Foundation's. As a result, in the mid-1980s, FF staff began to shift their grant-making on women and development to situating those issues in the context of human rights programmes in the Caribbean. These new efforts included grants for women's rights specifically in the Dominican Republic and Jamaica. As discussed in several programme papers, the focus on defining women's rights as human rights and promoting access to the law soon became the main thrust of women-related grant activities, along with a few initiatives related to research and action on feminism (Busby 1989).

FF's population-related work in the Caribbean, at the same time, shifted from reproductive health to reproductive rights and increasingly responded to the destructive new health problem for women, HIV/AIDS. Grant activities, for example, included work with prostitutes and other disadvantaged women in Haiti. Nonetheless, even as FF began to extend its work on reproductive health and reproductive rights and to move into new areas of women's rights programming in Haiti and the Dominican Republic, staff still sought advice from their long-standing guides for work in the region, the leadership at WAND and ISER.

For example, a staff member with new responsibilities for work in the region, Cynthia Sanborn, first sought advice from Antrobus and Massiah, as well as from

others at ISER, J. Edward Greene and Elsie Le Franc, before developing the new programmes. She also suggested to FF staff newly responsible for reproductive health that they start their exploratory efforts in the region with the same colleagues (Sanborn 1990).

In the mid-1980s, along with the increasing concern for human rights and HIV/AIDS prevention, another new issue emerged on the global agenda that reshaped both FF and CCNY's programmes, namely, the concern about the excessive deaths of women in childbirth in developing countries. While this issue was spotlighted at the 1974 World Conference on Population in Bucharest and the 1985 World Conference on Women in Nairobi; for the next decade, remained a secondary issue under the more prominent work related to maternal and child health, which usually emphasized the child health concerns. Addressing specifically what happens to women in childbirth rose to the top of the agenda with the publication of a key scientific advocacy paper (Rosenfield and Maine 1985). Globally, as well as in the Caribbean, that concern further contributed to shifting both FF and CCNY away from the broader-based focus on women in development and gender studies. The effect on CCNY is discussed below.

Yet another new global theme, environment and development, emerged in the early 1990s as a result of the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro (UN 1997). Moving away from women's reproductive rights and specific health concerns, this new theme predominated in a 1994 FF programme review of the Caribbean work (Schnepel 1994; Ford Foundation 1992/93). FF's Caribbean grant-making began to address these concerns under the rubric of urban poverty and rural poverty. While women were included in the action-oriented focus of this programme, they were not the central theme. A few activities related to women in the arts also began to enter into FF's regional grant-making. Based on my limited archival research on this era, FF's Caribbean grant-making now seemed to be shaped more from the

initiatives emanating from New York than by local advisors. More extensive archival investigation would help substantiate this change in approach.

At CCNY, the new global focus on women's health also attracted the attention of the new president, Dr. David Hamburg (1982-1997) and his colleagues. Following the 1985 Nairobi Conference, for example, as described in a 1986 memo for the Board, Commonwealth Program staff proposed working with WAND on a new women's health agenda. Both WAND and CCNY were responding to a request from the Pan-American Health Organization to broaden the focus on reproductive health, which both FF and CCNY had funded in the past, and include under-addressed lifestyle-related concerns, such as "stress, violence against women, drug use, prostitution, and occupational hazards" (Sheffield 1986, 2).

CCNY staff also recommended funding the first international Safe Motherhood Conference that gave visibility to the high rates of maternal mortality in developing countries. Held in Nairobi in early 1987, the Conference launched the International Safe Motherhood Initiative (Starrs 2006). The outcomes led the new leadership of CCNY's Strengthening Human Resources to refocus the efforts on women in development and the wider range of women's health-related concerns to preventing maternal mortality in the context of maternal and child health efforts (Rosenfield 2014, 350, 356).

While this work concentrated primarily on projects in Africa, staff members also responded positively to the "Caribbean Cooperation and Health" initiative of the new Director-General of the Pan-American Health Organization, Sir Dr. George Alleyne (originally from Barbados), to deepen the work on maternal and child health in the region, with mothers as a central focus. The grant entailed promoting "a program on intra-technical cooperation for maternal and child health" and was co-sponsored by Pew Charitable Trusts. It included "networking of Caribbean institutions, professional exchanges, workshops and courses, and a special experiment in distance teaching" (Rosenfield 2014, 367). The network was housed at The UWI but in different departments from its traditional partners.

Another new advisor, Dr. Wynant Patterson, one of the leading staff members of the Ministry of Health in Jamaica, began to work closely with staff. While the initiative to promote maternal and child health networking in the region emerged from the changing international and internal institutional contexts, it did not emerge from consultation on the ground with local advisors. Rather, it was a specific response to plans presented by an international organization (albeit the plans focused on the Caribbean and the organization was led by the dynamic and highly respected Alleyne).

In 1987, I became the programme officer for the developing countries programme and then assumed programme leadership in 1990. My role in supporting these grants leads me to close this section with some personal reflections. In contrast to the sequence of reports prepared by FF staff that were available to staff and made it clear where to turn for advice on women-related grant-making in the region, such information was not readily available at CCNY. Even though my colleagues and I were well aware of the global reputations of WAND and The UWI women's studies programmes, we were not aware of the prior CCNY connections and, therefore, did not consider consulting them on the women's health initiative. Not only was continuity broken in the region but the understanding of past lessons was not incorporated into the new initiatives and possibly influenced the scope of their impact.

Even more regrettably, when asked by the CCNY Board of Trustees to bring the Caribbean programme to a close in 1993-1994 (primarily because of overall budget cuts), we were constrained in our case for maintaining it by the lack of access to the deep history. The programme was unable to keep even a small set of activities in the region, despite engaging in themes elsewhere that resonated with the history of working on women's issues in the Caribbean, including health and development.

Closing Comments: the State of Philanthropy in the Region and Opportunities to Reinforce the Efforts of Caribbean Women

Beyond the three foundations discussed in this paper, there are now other private grant-making international foundations active in the Caribbean. Importantly, there are also now local grant-making foundations sustaining local initiatives. The former tend to focus on specific areas, such as environment, governance and child survival. The American WestWind Foundation, for example, is one of the few to sustain a commitment to reproductive health and reproductive rights. The Bernard Van Leer Foundation from the Netherlands has been a mainstay in support of early childhood initiatives. Increasingly, local foundations such as the JB Fernandes Trust and the Sandals Foundation are sustaining broader-based grassroots activities (Caribbean Philanthropy Network 2017).

The priorities of all these grant-makers are compelling but they also echo earlier work in the region. Unfortunately, these foundations have little or no access to the history of American foundation involvement in the region and the lessons learned. To date, there is no comprehensive analytical work on the broad historical role of American (or other) foundations in the Caribbean.

Two publications on specific themes stand out, one on the early Rockefeller Foundation work in public health by Steven Palmer, and another on Carnegie Corporation's efforts in public libraries by Alma Jordan (Palmer 2010; Jordan 1964). William Moody, responsible for international activities of the Rockefeller Brothers fund (RBF) from 1968-2001, provides both analytical and personal insights into the RBF environmental grant-making in the region over the period 1969-1988 (Moody 2014). In my book on the history of CCNY's international philanthropy, the work in the Caribbean appears under different time frames (Rosenfield 2014).

Two additional publications detail the broader work of foundations and nonprofits in the region. Notably, the *Palgrave Handbook of Philanthropy* includes an informative chapter telescoping the historical antecedents and institutional arrangements of foundations and nonprofits (Weipking and Hamdy

2015). In a report written for FF and published by the Caribbean Philanthropy Network, Etha Henry compares and contrasts attributes of the historically active foundations and nonprofits in the region (Henry 2008).

With the increasing diversity of philanthropic activity in the region, I want to conclude by emphasizing the value of additional research into the central arguments of this paper. Further research could illuminate in more detail, first, how the confluence of international and domestic contextual changes in the U.S. led to internal policy change for U.S. foundations. Second, researchers and activists could elaborate on how all those changes set the stage for women scholars and activists from the Caribbean to play a significant role in guiding and implementing foundations' strategies for the region. A systematic, comprehensive study, including oral histories with former foundation officers and their Caribbean advisors, would contribute considerably to understanding more fully the advantages and limitations of philanthropic initiatives in promoting and sustaining the role of Caribbean women in national and regional social, political and economic developments over the last 100 years. A multi-layered analysis of how American foundations reoriented their programmes to concentrate more directly on the central role of women in development could help inform new scholarship on women's issues in the region.

Harking back to the 1970s, those early leaders together with their foundation counterparts could share lessons learned to inform and promote continued leadership among the next generation of Caribbean women for shaping philanthropy, not only in the region but, as in the past, in the United States and globally.

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¹ The Rockefeller Foundation and the Ford Foundation archival collections are accessible at the Rockefeller Archive Center (RAC), Sleepy Hollow, New York. For conducting research online or with the assistance of an archivist, consult the RAC website, www.rockarch.org. Carnegie Corporation's archival collections are accessible through the Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Libraries. For assistance in finding material, consult the Curator, Carnegie Collections, <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/eresources/archives/rbml/Carnegie/index.html>.



Women/Gender and Development in Trinidad and Tobago and Post-genocide Rwanda: Complicating Human Security, Carving out a National Gender Policy Response to Violence Against Women

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*For Many Years
Man has sought his heaven in his
neighbour's blood...
Heaven is not in Kigali.
What a shame what a shame what a
shame what a dirty shame....*

David Michael Rudder, Heaven 1997

Abstract

Trinidad and Tobago's National Gender Policy (NGP) up to the end of 2017 remains in a state of policy inertia. While the passage of the NGP is a critical space for feminist activism, the content of the policy is similarly important and must never be overlooked. The policy priorities of any given NGP establish gendered discourses among state actors, non-state actors and populations. These priorities determine the efficacy of the NGP as a necessary tool to advance gender equity and equality and they instruct on the meanings of gender within the given national policy terrain. This paper uses the NGP experience of post-genocide Rwanda, and its refusal to engage with rape as a crime against humanity as a policy priority, to explore persistent invisibilities and the challenges inherent in reconciling violence against women, with public policy making. The paper uses the backdrop of the Rwandan experience to deliberate on Trinidad and Tobago's capacity to carve out its own response to violence against women in the absence of a comprehensive NGP framework.

Keywords: Women and development, gender and development, national gender policy, human security, violence against women, gender equity, Rwanda, Trinidad and Tobago

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On 4th August 2017, over 90% of the Rwandese voting population re-elected President Paul Kagame for the third time since the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) leader devised a requisite response to the atrocities of the Rwandan Genocide² while the United Nations and the international community remained flummoxed in some cases and invested in fleeing Rwanda in other cases. Like many persons living in multi-ethnic, multi-racial societies, I am convinced that an occurrence like the Rwandan genocide is an impossibility in my country. In spite of this conviction, pre- and post-genocide Rwanda is an area of interest. I was born in, and have spent most of my life in Trinidad and Tobago, a country described as one of the most ethnically diverse territories in the Caribbean, a diversity that dates back to the nineteenth century (Brereton 2010; Trotman 2007). In the midst of Trinidad and Tobago's vociferously articulated celebration of its racial diversity, the hallmark of national identity - a marker best fêted by the words of the national anthem 'Here every creed and race finds an equal place', is not always enthusiastically subscribed to in public discourse. In Trinidad and Tobago, ethnic perceptions are political factors (Bienen (1977) in Sudama 1983: 77). Personal narratives and vitriolic expressions of identities of race and difference have been known to become loud in times of comfort in spaces of homogeneity, affinity of phenotype, anonym and most publicly, in the heat of national politics. In such spaces and times, the palatable language of unity and oneness in diversity has been known to be abandoned in exchange for more triumphalist, group-based narratives that celebrate any given mother-land above all other geographies and populations (Brereton, 2010).

It is these narratives, which are committed to the project of producing dehumanizing and isolating voices against the racial other (Thompson, 2007) in the extreme, that produce the necessary fuel for the level of violence such as that perpetrated in Rwanda in 1994. In times, when under the guise of free speech, people lay bare their expressions of group identity, loudly proclaimed in the context of buy-in to stereotypical, often damaging, representations of other ethnicities, Rwanda shifts from the background to the foreground of one's mind and the 10,000 plus kilometres between Port of Spain to Kigali conceptually

becomes a significantly shorter distance. Thankfully, although there are other narratives emanating both from Port of Spain and post-genocide Kigali, the potential for violent fallout that can be produced by unchecked public sentiment of ethnic division must be a public policy issue in any multi-ethnic country.

Violence is essentially a social construct. It is the social and cultural dimensions of violence that makes evident its power and meaning, whether it is heroic, justified, reasonable or unacceptable (Engle Merry, 2009). The human face of violence is critical to how meanings are assigned by the observer to the victim and the social context of the given event. This socio-cultural framing of violence demands a peculiar mindfulness of public policy-making in multi-ethnic societies to build peace through an expressed commitment to eliminating all forms of structural violence, often packaged in the hegemony of ordinariness, frequently overlooked as accepted norms (Ibid 5). One important aspect of this form of structural violence is gender-based violence. The intersection of gender-based violence and public policy in the form of national gender policies in Rwanda and Trinidad and Tobago is where I choose to situate my question.

A National Gender Policy could be very simply defined as a meta-plan for the integration of gender equality and equity concerns across sectors and within sectors for any given national bureaucracy. Ideally the policy should take into consideration the place of both governmental and non-governmental actors in the operationalization of this plan, analyze the ways in which different actors position themselves in the national plan towards the achievement of gender equity and equality and set out a national government's commitments and priority areas over a given time period (McFee, 2017). Although my inquiry into the Rwanda 2010 NGP is geographically distant from my Caribbean home, conceptually, I am also attempting to use the Rwandan context as a means of unpacking the practical significance of NGPs within a Trinidad and Tobago reality. That is, how does the idea of a National Gender Policy translate into a

practical tool of gender equity, equality and the elimination of gender-based violence as a development priority within these two countries?

Of particular significance to this analysis is the fact that while Rwanda has an approved National Gender Policy, recognized by the country's President for its importance in influencing equitable development, Trinidad merely has a draft document. This document that has been deliberated on since the 1980's, is yet to be finalized and agreed to by the country's Cabinet. However, in the face of this difference both countries share a historically-placed public policy challenge around gender-based violence. For Rwanda, its immediate framing of GBV emerges out of rape as a crime against humanity emerging from the 1994 genocide. Trinidad and Tobago, from the genocide of its original populations, to slavery, followed by indentureship and into the 1840's through to the 1950's, structural violence has produced a normalization of violence, particularly violence against women (Brereton, 2010) In spite of this historical grounding of violence within these two multi-ethnic states, current global governance and national advancement has seen both countries grapple with various mechanisms to advance gender equity and equality such as National Gender Policies.

Coming to the NGP

The National Gender Policy is supposed to be the public policy framework that comprehensively sets up the national conversation with women and gender and development. In the context of the development of the 2010 Rwandan National Gender Policy, a post-genocide Rwanda endeavours to address issues of human security as it broadly interfaces with gender-based violence and rape as a crime against humanity. In the case of Rwanda, the silence of the document on the issue of managing the after-effects of rape as a crime against humanity is a curious omission.

In the case of Trinidad and Tobago, the regional impetus for gender mainstreaming as a development strategy emanated from CARICOM's 3rd Plan of Action on Gender and Development, which called for gender mainstreaming to be adopted into the culture and organization of institutions, including their policy-making and planning and in public debate (Andaiye 2003). Out of this, the Cayman Islands in 2000 was the first territory to undertake the production of a National Gender Policy (McFee 2017). Subsequent to the Cayman initiative and in keeping with the desire for states within the English-speaking Caribbean³ to fit into the larger global discourse around gender and development, a further six states engaged in the process of developing national policies on gender with varying degrees of success. These countries are Cayman Islands, Trinidad and Tobago, Dominica, British Virgin Islands, Jamaica, The Bahamas and Belize⁴ (Ibid).

Pat Mohammed describes the place of national gender policies in the Caribbean as follows:

In spite of these collisions within the State and outside of the Caribbean post-colonial State and how it positions itself as an organizer of gender equity and equality, short of the establishment of a strong national machinery on gender equity and equality, the National Gender Policy for Gender Equity and Equality remains the most integrated national level marker and the most sought after expression of national commitments to the cause of Gender equity (Mohammed 2010, 2).

In spite of the significance for countries of the Anglophone Caribbean, Trinidad and Tobago remains without a national gender policy. This is a national conundrum in a regional space where the almost deification of the National Gender Policy as a definitive marker of governments' commitments to gender justice is a persistent reality. It is in keeping the absolute importance of the National Gender Policy within the gender and development policy space regionally that I seek to explore its utility in post-genocide Rwanda. My inquiry centres on its engagement with rape as a crime against humanity, as a form of

gender-based violence, and its ability to advance a reframing of human security concerns.

Rwanda, the Genocide and Rape as a crime against Humanity

Craig Murphy describes the Rwandan Genocide as 'one of the more troubling and more widely accepted instances of the moral insufficiency of contemporary global governance' (Murphy 2002). Murphy views the Rwandan Genocide as an example of neglect by all transnational, intergovernmental and national institutions and organizations capable of making a difference at that time (Ibid). Failure of these organizations to act represents for Murphy the absence of a moral and ethical impetus, central to any study of the global polity⁵. The international legal response to the massacre of approximately 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus in Rwanda was the establishment of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) by the United Nations (UN) to prosecute crimes against humanity⁶. The ICTR was established by the UN Security Council resolution 955, passed on November 8th 1994. The Tribunal was established to prosecute persons responsible for genocide and other violations under international humanitarian law committed in Rwanda between January 1st 1994 and December 31st 1994.

Historically, conflict rape, more recently referred to as "gender crimes", are persistent facets of war. These crimes are recorded as a part of international wars, civil wars, cleansings (ethnic and otherwise) and revolutions (Haddad, 2011; McKenzie, 2010; Aroussi, 2011). Documentation on these crimes dates as far back as 1385, when Richard II of England penned rules of prohibiting wartime rape in his Articles of War. World War II produced a number of examples of such activity, a well-known example of which is the construction of the Japanese Comfort Woman as a part of war history (Haddad, 2011). The existence of these activities in international conflict has not translated easily into them being treated as crimes and, by extension, prosecutable offences in international law.

Prior to the establishment of the most recent UN ad-hoc tribunals, gender crimes have been an area of substantial inaction in international litigation⁷.

Established in 1994, the ICTR as one of the UN's ad-hoc tribunals⁸, has been credited and acknowledged 'for substantially advancing and giving content and meaning to international law 'as it pertains to gender crimes (Goldstone, 2008). The ICTR has been noted as contributing to international law as it relates to gender crimes in a number of ways, including the following:

- The documentation of the systematic rape and sexual assault of at least two hundred and fifty thousand 250,000 Tutsi and Hutu women as part of the genocide;
- It established standards for adjudicating cases of sexual violent crimes;
- It provided the first case in international humanitarian law where rape was found to be an act of genocide⁹;
- It secured five successful convictions of rape that were not overturned on appeal;
- The Court where the first woman to be charged with genocide and the first woman charged with inciting rape as a form of genocide, former Minister of Family and Women's Affairs Mrs. Pauline Nyiramasuhuko.

Although the prosecution of gender crimes in international law is a legal advancement, how this legal advancement is translated into procedural justice in post-conflict situations remains a fundamental challenge to post-conflict reconstruction and development (Menkel-Meadow, 2002). The successful prosecution of these crimes is one aspect of the legal acceptance that they exist as offences, which need to be treated with as public offences. The prosecution of such crimes does not mean that the underlying political, social and cultural structures which rendered such crime silent and invisible to an international legal response have shifted to facilitate a public institutional response to this challenge (Ibid). An isolated legal 'coming of age'¹⁰ of conflict gender crimes does not ensure a post-conflict reconstruction space committed to gender equity, gender equality and social justice. Such goals can only be

effectively pursued if legal gains are built upon by an expanded public policy response focused on constructing a renegotiated institutional and ideological national response to gender-based violence.

This paper uses the case of Rwanda to explore the tensions between the international legal gains as an encounter with legal justice, and the construction of a broader post conflict social justice, which seeks to treat with the challenge of long term threats to survival and human security¹¹ (Burke, 2013). It looks specifically at the international prosecution of rape as a crime against humanity by the ICTR and the extent to which this advancement is articulated in the Rwandan Government's post-genocide commitment to gender equity and equality, namely the National Gender Policy¹². Using the National Gender Policy of Rwanda as a frame for the integration of gender into the development plan of the country, the paper explores the extent to which the policy pushes the boundaries of traditional state-based, militarized representations of security, towards the recognition of a more complex construct of securities (Mutimer, Grayson, & Marshall, 2013) through the engagement of sexual violence, in the form of rape, in the policy space.

The traditional silence on gender crimes in conflict situations and post-conflict reconstruction is in keeping with a notion of security that privileges the state as the centre of security. It is in keeping with an understanding that war is fought between states and factions, thereby rendering the ways in which it is experienced at the level of the individual invisible and irrelevant to post-conflict development (Haddad, 2011). In shifting beyond the state, to treat with rape as a tool of war is to undergo a fundamental shift towards addressing the personal dimensions of gender-based violence in war. The potential of this modification of international law to be reflected in the post-conflict democratization processes lies in the capacity of post-conflict policy-making to embrace the complexity and lasting impact of gender-related wartime violence (Onyinyechukwu, 2010/2011). This gender related wartime violence is both intricate and diverse, mirroring entrenched socio-cultural gendered constructions that shape how

societies are ordered, understand themselves and interface with policy-making in the wake of conflict (Ibid). It is at the interface of policy-making, gender-based violence and post-conflict reconstruction that I locate this inquiry. The national policy focus is the 2010 Rwandan National Gender Policy. The treatment of gender-based violence in this policy is used as the basis for assessing the lens and the national response to rape as a tool of warfare. Additionally, the international policy is also utilized as a means of understanding the norms of gender constructions, gender crimes and related gender-based violence in the centralizing of the individual as the centre of security.

The Peculiarities of the Rwandan Human Security Challenge and Gender Crimes

Gender crimes¹³ in the context of the Rwandan genocide refer specifically to the crimes of rape and sexual violence which represented an integral feature of the 100-days experience. The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of Human Rights in Rwanda has estimated that between 250,000 and 500,000 rapes occurred during the genocide (Haffajee 2006). According to reports emerging from the Special Rapporteur's Office, the occurrences of rape in Rwanda have been described as systemic, a weapon of the genocide, and a political and military tool used to target Tutsi women as a means of obliterating the Tutsi.

In her work on Rwanda's rape victims Binaifer Nowrojee¹⁴ detailed the following:

throughout the Rwandan genocide, widespread sexual violence, directed predominantly against Tutsi women, occurred in every prefecture (Nowrojee 1996). Every part of the Rwandan environment was a location for rape, often multiple gang-rape. Women were held individually and in groups as sexual slaves for the purposes of rape. Women were not just raped behind closed doors, they were raped on the streets, at checkpoints, in cultivated plots, in or near government offices, hospitals, churches and other public buildings. They were raped to death using sharp sticks or other objects. Their dead bodies were often left naked and spread-eagled, with nearby pools of blood and semen, in public view. The hate propaganda before and during the genocide

fueled the sexual violence by demonizing Tutsi women's sexuality and, as the Media trial judgment noted in convicting three media executives for publicly inciting to genocide, "made the sexual attack of Tutsi women a foreseeable consequence" (ICTR2003, ¶1118, p.27). Sexually subjugating and mutilating Tutsi women was a way to attack the ethnic group and to punish the women.

Other accounts place the minimum number of rape victims at 350,000 over the 100 days of the conflict. The victims were mainly Tutsi women and girls aged 2 to over 70 years old, targeted for rape, gang rape, sexual torture, sexual slavery and forced marriages. In many cases, perpetrators also forced victims to engage in sexual acts with family members, mutilated victims' genitalia and cut off their breasts (Zrally, Rubin-Smith, & Betancourt, 2011). Although accounts of the number of victims vary, the widespread nature of the incidents of rape during the genocide has seen the gender-based violence during the genocide become known as Collective Sexual Violence¹⁵ (CSV) or sexual terrorism (WHO 2002). It is the widespread occurrence of these crimes coupled with the international significance of rape finally being treated with as a crime of war that makes the handling of this issue of post-genocide gender policy-making in Rwanda an important phenomenon. The ICTR was the first court to prosecute rape as a crime against humanity, the extent of the rapes makes gender-based violence a prolific feature of the lived experience of most Rwandan Tutsi women and the ways in which insecurity is experienced (Sylvester, 2010; McKenzie, 2010) in Rwandan society. The engagement or absence of engagement of gender-based crimes and their fallout provides a critical understanding into the ways in which the Rwandan government balances the security of the state against the security of its citizens. It also brings to the fore the gender transformative capacity of a parliament where 49% of its members are female. Finally, it affords an exploration of the norms under which international legal justice is able to shift from legal precedent to be consolidated into social justice (Menkel-Meadow, 2002) by being incorporated into national development by a broadening of the discourse around security of the individual.

Rape as a weapon of war, Political Representation, NGPs, Human Security and Reconstruction

To frame this inquiry I use the lens provided by the National Gender Policy (NGP) of Rwanda as a product of the parliament with the highest number of females in the world, as a bridge between international obligations around gender and as a national development framework. I am also building on the perspective of gender theorizing on peace building, which explores the ways in which post-conflict democratization tends to marginalize the concerns of women, gender and gender-based violence, in pursuit of a 'return to the peace of an imagined past' (El-Bushra, 2007; McKenzie, 2010; Aroussi, 2011; Silber, 2004). It is a significant enough statement of government intent to assess the extent and specific areas of gender slippage which informs post-conflict development thinking. The NGP is a national blueprint for the incorporation of international and regional gender equity and equality commitments into domestic legislation. It allows for an inventory of national laws and practices which may be discriminatory along lines of sex and gender. Additionally, the NGP highlights governments' priority areas for action in the short and medium term towards the elimination of gendered discrimination in a given state (McFee 2017). In the case of Rwanda post-1994, the 2010 National Gender Policy¹⁶ is defined as follows;

The National Gender Policy highlights principal guidelines on which sectoral policies and programmes will base to integrate gender issues in their respective social, cultural, economic and political planning and programming (Rwanda, 2010).

Policy making is inherently difficult. The NGP offers one of the most comprehensive insights into the ways in which the meaning of gender and gender analysis rooted in feminist politics (Cornwall, Harrison, & Whitehead, 2007) brings to policy making and implementation very peculiar challenges. The NGP also reflects an important element of the national political will around issues of gender equity and equality. Although the document is the product of the work of the Gender Ministry, it must be deliberated upon and approved at the

highest levels of government in order to be implemented across all sectors. Therefore, political buy-in at the parliamentary level is fundamental to its development, passage and implementation. Where this buy-in does not occur there may be policy delay, evaporation or termination (McFee 2017).

Rwanda currently ranks first in the Commonwealth with 56 per cent representation of women in its national Parliament. This high level of female representation in politics in Rwanda builds on the 2003 election when the population elected 39 women to an 80-member Chamber of Deputies. At that time Rwanda replaced Sweden as the country with the highest percentage of females in its national legislature (Burnet, 2008). The translation into real gains for women's presence in the highest political positions of power and decision-making and their ability to influence policy is a real tension in the politics of Rwanda. The existence of high numbers of females in politics in Rwanda has been heralded by the country's President and the United Nations as the dawn of 'a more peaceful, more equitable age in Rwanda' (Ibid). However, given the extent of the violence experienced in Rwanda, pivotal to assigning value to the high number of female politicians in the parliament is the ability of the government to build a gender-sensitive peace cognizant of the vulnerability of women to sexual violence in fragile states (Silber, 2004; Zraly, Rubin-Smith, & Betancourt, 2011).

This peace must be steeped in a consciousness of the ways in which collective sexual violence influences gender relations in post-conflict situations and points to how gender-based violence is positioned in the development discourse of such countries. Wartime rape is a by-product of embedded patriarchal norms laid bare during conflict (McKenzie, 2010). The process of baring these patriarchal gender norms during conflict integrates an excessively violent representation of gender-based violence throughout such a state. It must act as a point of reference for any post-conflict policy on gender and development. This emerges from the fact that both internationally and nationally, rape has been recognized as a central component of the body politic of that state.

Given the context-specific gendered policy making that shifts the post-conflict development discourse beyond the conflict/security nexus, the policy response must be located outside of conventional understanding of gender inequity and inequality. Inherent in this process is the owning of the legacy of wartime rape, an effective policy engagement of rape as a crime against humanity at the national level and the grounding of a post-conflict reconstruction, gender and development frame within the larger context of the fallout from these crimes. This response is central to addressing wartime sexual violence more efficiently within the larger context of human insecurity and the ways in which sex and gender influence experiences of wartime sexual violence (Denov, 2006).

Rwanda's NGP, Framing a National Policy Response: Locating the NGP as a tool of development

The National Gender Policy (NGP) is an innovative policy product. It is a plan that positions itself across sectors, thereby providing an integrated lens on any government's holistic development process. Most policies are specific to a sector; the NGP, like any tool of gender and development, is a cross-cutting tool of analysis. The overall goal of the Rwandan National Gender Policy 2010 is to promote gender equality and equity in Rwanda through a clearly defined process for mainstreaming gender needs and concerns across all sectors of development (Rwanda, 2010). GBV is mentioned as a strategy in the policy in the following:

1. Increasing measures to address GBV by tackling the different influencing factors. The involvement of men in addressing GBV should be taken as key;
2. Dissemination and enforcement of GBV laws and continued revision of remaining gender discriminatory laws.

Root causes of Gender Based Violence are detailed as follows;

Gender-based violence (GBV) remains rampant despite of various measures adopted to address it. A significant number of gender discriminatory laws have been revised, although not exhaustively, but their

dissemination needs to cover the entire national territory. Different influencing factors have been identified including poverty, ignorance, consumption of alcohol, to name a few. Women are the majority among the victims of GBV and men are the majority among the perpetrators. (Rwanda, 2010)

Fighting violence against women is listed as one of the key achievements in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment in Rwanda, resulting in the following:

- Establishment of One stop centers for GBV survivors care in medical, psychosocial, legal support;
- National strategic plan on UNSC Resolution 1325 has been elaborated;
- Promulgation of law preventing and punishing Gender Based Violence;
- Enacting gender sensitive laws and reviewing existing discriminatory laws;
- Establishment of anti - GBV and child protection committees from the grassroots level to the National level;
- Gender Desk in Rwanda National Police, Rwanda Defense Force and in National Public Prosecution Authority;
- Free hotline in Rwanda National Police, Rwanda Defense Force and in and in National Public Prosecution Authority;
- A Men's association (RWAMREC) that strives to sensitize the population and eradicate gender based violence specifically violence against women (Ibid).

However some critical silences remain. There is no engagement of more recent Security Council resolutions beyond 1325¹⁷. The achievements are institutional responses which do not provide a measure of the functionality or efficacy of the policy recommendations. Consequently, the ensuing policy strategies are silent on the relationship between the listed achievements in the form of mechanisms, the policy areas which are the heart of the NGP and the lived experiences of

the population in their implementation. At the programming level, the NGP is silent on GBV; also, the post-conflict gender-based trauma is not mentioned in the health section of the policy. The silences in the Rwandan NGP are very relevant in assessing the NGP as a culturally-specific tool of development.

Silence on gender in broader policy making is understood as a consistent characteristic of institutions of hegemonic masculinity; they are fundamental to understanding perceived normalcy and a sense of how things are (Krosnell, 2006). This contributes to the common sense implicit of masculinity (Hutchings, 2008) that is a hallmark of conventional approaches to policy-making, which marginalize groups, particularly women, that fall beyond the construction of the 'normal'. However, the evidence of the silences on gender-based violence and war-time rape within this NGP brings to the fore more complex questions around the context of the relevance of the recommendations to the reconstruction of Rwanda, the possibilities of state transformation, and the state-centric security discourse, to ensure a sustained marginalization of women's security in the wider policy framework of the state.

Firstly, the Rwandan NGP addresses gender-based violence as a current development challenge and as an overall goal of development steeped in the principles of gender equity and gender equality. It is lodged against a background of colonial male supremacy, the need for increased female participation in decision making and the international frames of 1325, CEDAW and the Beijing Platform for Action. By establishing such a context for the addressing of GBV in Rwanda in 2010, the RPF-led government has taken an a-contextual development paradigm in which to locate its strategy. Engaging violence against women as detailed in the above mentioned documents as an obstacle to the achievement of objectives of equality, development and peace (United Nations 1996) is insufficient. This approach is helpful in providing the language around the role of states in protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms. It is silent on the nuanced security challenge of reconciling a collective sexual trauma. With the development challenges of

Rwanda at present, nowhere in the policy is the entrenched memory of the widespread sexual trauma of the 100 days addressed or used as a context to inform policy recommendations or priorities.

The Rwandan state is dealing with more than just reconciling gender-based violence and the challenge of development. The very public and systematic use of sexual violence requires an explicit public policy response to sexual violence, which in the context of Rwanda is no longer a personal or private experience. Sexual violence has become engrained in the collective consciousness of the Rwandan people and is central to the ways in which insecurity is constructed. A human security response relevant to the Rwandan experience must be cognizant of this tension that seeks to balance the objectives of policies to deal with past human rights abuses, prevent future human rights abuses and repair the damage that has been caused. The experience is compounded by the need of victims and the society as a whole to heal from the wounds inflicted upon them by the former regime and the acts of sexual violence, which often has to be traded off against the political reality in which the new government may have limited political power, and in which it may have inherited a fragile state (Sarkin, 2001).

The human security agenda is concerned with human life, human dignity, empowerment and security within not only the personal or community realm, but also in the realms of economics, food, health, environment and politics (UNDP 1994). The human security agenda in a post-1994 Rwanda requires an augmented social contract between the Rwandan state and its citizens. This contract should re-order the embedded institutional structures which reinforce systems of moral exclusion (Opatow, Gerson, & Woodside, 2005) and cleavages of insecurity within the Rwandan state and society. The Rwandan NGP is an important document in the broadening of the national agenda on rape as a crime against humanity. Rendering the societal impact of conflict rape invisible through silence in this national document to some extent invalidates

advancements made internationally in expanding mechanisms to address conflict rape.

The International Renegotiated

It is important to note that the international policy space has sought to grapple with the challenge of rape as a crime against humanity. The prosecution of rape as a crime against humanity provided more than an advancement in the practice of international law as it relates to the prosecution of gender based crimes. The legal advancement ultimately forced structures of global governance and the practice of post-conflict reconstruction and development to become overtly cognizant of the challenge of mainstreaming concerns of women and gender into larger security and development discourses and activity. The most pivotal of these developments has been the respective resolutions passed by the United Nations Security Council. These resolutions are as follows: Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1960 (2010), and 2106 (June 2013). The language, source and the meanings (Duncanson, 2009) of these resolutions are very significant in the expanded articulation of the security of war beyond the protection of the state. These resolutions position the UN Security Council beyond a need to map causes, historical impacts, weapons, civil-military outcomes of war and violence, towards an engagement of some gendered implications of human security (Sylvester, 2010).

Rwanda is unique as the first country in which rape was established as a crime against humanity. The ways in which rape as a crime against humanity becomes translated in its national space would always be of global significance in creating understanding around how post-conflict reconstruction becomes owned, and will also be a weighty component of a gender transformative, national development process. Rwanda's post-conflict NGP is a critical statement of government intent and understanding of gender norms and gender relations within its national space. The NGP, like all other policy documents, is a political statement, a negotiated representation of how the

government sees itself, its country and its plans for reconstruction post-conflict. The invisibility of conflict rape in the policy reinforces the tension between a present contextual starting point for development and an imagined peace-time 'normal' from which all countries seek to begin their policy process. It also facilitates insight into the ways in which international frames are able to take precedent over national experiences in policy making, while concurrently highlighting the difficulty of translating international legal justice pertaining to rape and gender-based violence into a national consciousness of embedded gender inequities. However, Rwanda is not alone in its refusal to compel public policy making to connect with gender inequalities consistent with every-day forms of violence that hallmark how masculinities and femininities are constructed, interact and produce gender systems.

Returning to My Caribbean Reality: Weighing Policy and Reality

CARICOM nation states have a long-standing commitment to advancing gender equity and equality in public policy. As far back as the Treaty establishing the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), signed on 4th July 1973, 'The Position of Women in Caribbean Society' was listed as an area of functional co-operation on the schedule to the Treaty (Rodney-Edwards 1999). The first regional Bureau of Women's Affairs was established in Jamaica in 1973, and in 1978 a Nutrition / Women's Desk was set up in the CARICOM Secretariat. This UNICEF-supported desk was replaced in 1980 with an independent Women's Affairs Desk, funded by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (CARICOM 2005). The creation of the CARICOM Women's Desk led to the legitimizing of a regional space where ministers with responsibility for women's affairs began to meet to deliberate on those issues deemed as being issues critical to women and gender, with violence against women and, later, gender-based violence, being identified as the oldest policy priority pertaining to women and gender in the region. Model legislation around women was an early public policy deliverable of the work of the CARICOM Women's Desk, regional minister's responsible for women's affairs, Caribbean activists and scholars, all of whom formed part of the wider Caribbean Women's Movement

at the time (Rodney-Edwards 1999; CARICOM 1995; CARICOM 2005). Model legislation specific to gender-based violence covered the following areas:

- Sexual Harassment
- Sexual Offences
- Domestic Violence (CARICOM 1995:5).

In 1991, Trinidad and Tobago was the first country to pass domestic violence legislation, expanding and building on a process which started with the Sexual Offences Bill in 1984 (Mohammed, 2015). The introduction of domestic violence legislation and its attending institutional arrangements must be understood as not simply a legal product. Like conflict rape in Rwanda, domestic violence legislation, as an act to address gender-based violence, reflects a multi-layered product born out of an interactive, at times contentious, narrative-rich, historically-placed, public policy process. Mindie Lazarus Black describes it as part of a broader process of decolonization (Lazarus-Black 2001: 288), and an act of re-gendering of the State (Lazarus-Black and Engle Merry 2003: 932). For Tracy Robinson the passage of domestic violence legislation is part of an 'ideological project' of law reform and gender-based violence (Robinson, 2004: 9).

However, the Trinidadian domestic violence legislative experience offers another reflection of the significance of a national gender policy. In the case of Rwanda, the silencing of conflict rape and its deferral to the international is a glaring insufficiency to provide a space for unpacking national gendered realities of a post-genocide space. In the case of Trinidad and Tobago, after 26 years of a Domestic Violence Bill, our insufficiency lies in our inability to provide an NGP framework to guide sector-specific institutional failings that impinge on the efficacy of the existing legislation. Amendment of the Domestic Violence legislation is not an isolated legal act. The absence of the multi-sectoral plan that speaks to gender as a cross-cutting variable in development, severely limits the institutional adjustments required to address gender-based violence nationally, as a critical development challenge. As the approval of a National

Gender Policy appears to be an increasingly unattainable goal in Trinidad and Tobago, this reduces the likelihood that public policy will address any possible amendment of Domestic Violence legislation as a component of a broader multi-sectoral conversation.

Undeniably, the passage of law is insufficient in the management of the everyday-ness and multidimensional nature of all forms of gender-based violence in Trinidad and Tobago. The idea of the everyday-ness of forms of gender-based violence such as domestic violence draws on the work of Mindie Lazarus-Black (2007). Lazarus-Black explored how the statute's capacity to translate legal protection into de facto protection, many times is affected by unnoticed events and encounters that colour what persons perceive they are able to achieve in the name of justice (Lazarus-Black 2007).

While Rwanda is silent on this in the context of a National Gender Policy, in Trinidad and Tobago, in the absence of a NGP, we have engaged in a number of persistent cognitive shortcuts in our construction of gender-based violence. The most evident of these is our public policy perception that domestic violence is gender-based violence. I do believe critical to a relevant framing of GBV in the policy space is an unpacking of its dimensions. Intimate partner violence, rape, incest, sexual harassment are all components of one ill. The NGP is the critical multi-sectoral tool that identifies GBV within the context of sectoral responsibility and sets up a necessary conversation between the state, its population and the bureaucracy.

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¹ The RPF, is a militia started in 1980, is comprised of Rwandan exiles in Uganda, Tanzania, Burundi and Zaire in addition to Rwandans from within Rwanda (Bennet, 2008).

² On April 6th 1994, the plane carrying Presidents Habyarimana of Rwanda and President Ntaryamira of Burundi was shot down by unknown assailants, causing the death of all the passengers. Almost instantly, consistent with the longstanding Hutu and Tutsi ethnic tensions within the region, Hutu soldiers and militias, and later civilians embarked on the killing of Tutsi civilians and members of the Rwandese Opposition. The violence quickly spread throughout Rwanda. It is estimated that over a period of 100 days more than 800,000 persons, mainly Tutsis, lost their lives (Boed, 2001)

³ The Caribbean within the context of this paper refers to the English-speaking Caribbean, namely, the 14 members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). These countries share a recent political history of maintaining a British styled parliamentary democracy (Rogozinski, 1992:271) and by extension, these countries share similarly styled state machineries.

⁴ Belize is the only country which has the experience of laying two National Gender Policies before its Cabinet. In 2011 it laid its update of the 2002 Policy for the consideration of its Cabinet.

⁵ At the time of the genocide there was in Rwanda a United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR). The UNAMIR was a UN military force whose mission lasted from October 1993- March 1996. Its activities were meant to aid the peace process between the Hutu-dominated Rwandese Government and the Tutsi dominated rebel force fighting the Rwandese Government at the time the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF). At that time of the genocide, at UN headquarters the presence of the UNAMIR in Rwanda was being deliberated on in the context of the need to justify the expenditure because 'sever conditions' were required for the renewal of its mandate. The mandate of the UNAMIR force did not permit it to intervene in the activities that became the genocide (Prunier, 2010).

⁶ Crimes against humanity is defined by the Tribunal as comprising of four components; (1) the act must be inhumane in nature and character, causing great suffering, or serious injury to mental or physical health; (2) the act must be committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack; (3) the act must be committed against members of the civilian population; (4) the act must be committed on one or more discriminatory grounds, namely national, political, ethnic, racial or religious grounds (Miller, 2004)

⁷ the historical prosecution of sexual assault under international criminal law has not occurred, as represented by the silence about rape at the Nuremberg and Tokyo Trials, even though cases of sexual assault were thoroughly documented. The absence of post-conflict rape prosecution mutually reinforces the ambiguity of the international criminal law about sexual assault. Sexual crimes are not clearly and explicitly demarcated in international criminal law, but are divided between different categories of abuses and crimes, such as crimes against humanity, violations of the Geneva Conventions, and most recently as a component of genocide. Both the ICTY and the ICTR have contributed significantly to the emergence of clearer definitions, reduced ambiguity and the development of standards for the adjudication of such cases (Haddad, 2011)

⁸ In May 1993 the UN Security Council faced with the challenge of increasing reports of widespread war crimes being committed in the former Yugoslavia established the ad-hoc International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY)

⁹ In the conviction of Jean Paul Akayesu the trial chambers found that rape and other acts of sexual violence can be constituted as an infliction of 'bodily or mental harm intended to destroy the members of the Tutsi ethnic group (Haddad 2011:110). The defendant Jean Paul Akayesu was sentenced to 15 years for rape in 1998 which was upheld on appeal in 2001 (Nowrojee 2005).

¹⁰ This legal 'coming of age' refers to the legal acknowledgement of existence that is consistent with the successful prosecution of such crime.

¹¹ The concept of human security is a product of a post-cold war policy and theoretical dilemma to shift understandings and the practice of security beyond a narrowly defined military-based construct if national security. Human security is seen as both an approach to the practice of security and part of a larger academic discourse that makes the individual the referent object of security (Peoples & Vaughan-Williams, 2010; Hoogensen & Rottem, 2004).

¹² A National Gender Policy (NGP) is a meta-plan for the integration of gender equality and equity concerns across sectors and within sectors of any state machinery. This plan should take into consideration the place of both governmental and non-governmental actors in its operationalization.

¹³ In defining gender crimes in this context the testimony of Romeo Dillaire, former UN peacekeeping force commander in his 2004 testimony before the ICTR, spoke to seeing 'some men that were mutilated also, their genitals and the like (Nowrojee 2005:1)'. Therefore although the focus of the gender crimes in the literature tends to be women there is some limited work on the fact that there were male victims.

¹⁴ Binaifer Nowrojee is a member of the Coalition for Women's Human Rights in Conflict Situations and a lecturer at Harvard Law School. She directs the Open Society Institute's Initiative in East Africa (OSIEA) and previously worked at Human Rights Watch. She is the author of the Human Rights Watch report, *Shattered Lives: Sexual Violence during the Rwandan Genocide and its Aftermath* (1996).

¹⁵ Collective Sexual Violence refers to the widespread systematic use of rape in war or a pattern of sexual violence perpetrated on civilians by agents of a state, political group or politicized ethnic group (WHO 2002; Green 2004)

¹⁶ The 2010 National Gender Policy of Rwanda is endorsed by the nation's president Mr. Paul Kagame and represents a revision of the 2004 National Gender Policy. This revision process included a number of shifts which included the following: involving men in addressing gender equity and equality challenges, an expanded presence for the private sector and a shift in the function of the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion. The Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion, formerly focused on implementing programmes for the translation of policy into action, has now undertaken a new limited role involving design and coordination of the implementation of the policy process.

¹⁷ It was the first formal and legal document from the United Nations Security Council that required parties in a conflict to respect women's rights and to support their participation in peace negotiations and in post-conflict reconstruction. Although 1325 is a critical resolution, more recent resolutions have actively engaged in outlining required responses to violence against women, rape as a crime against humanity and more nuanced representations of gender based violence in conflict.



Should We Still Hope? Gender Policy, Social Justice, and Affect in the Caribbean

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Abstract

National gender policies continue to be offered as redemptive, an instrument that saves us from inequity, and excessive – an instrument that challenges scarce resources if implemented. In this paper, I try to engage this tension by first examining the ways in which engagements with these policies are rendered and narrativized by Caribbean nation-states. I then argue for an affective turn, noting that if policy is to be effective it must first matter – people must care (as distinct from want). To this end, I argue for the building of “gender polities” and point to the work of queer activism in the region as a possible model for how this idea of a “gender polity” might prove to be effective.

Keywords: social justice, national gender policy, gender polity, queer activism, Caribbean

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The Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing) of 1995 brought unprecedented attention to the question of “gender” as a category of sociopolitical transformation. The impassioned speeches of Burmese human rights activist and dissident Aung San Su Kyi and then First Lady of the United States, Hillary Rodham Clinton, signalled a bold and strident assertion of women’s ontological value. Women’s rights were named as human rights and pronounced integral to the pursuit of “peace, security, human rights and democracy.” Both speakers sealed a link between two actors – women and the state. Two actors, who, going forward, would need to find a language to talk to each other.¹

Contemporary “national gender policies” are now the primary scripts used for these conversations. Consequently, I am keen to understand the kind of conversations that are documented in these scripts and the ways that gender policies orient our attention toward certain issues and away from others. Further, and by way of redress, I’m interested in the kinds of strategies that might minimize the many ways in which these two agents often talk past each other. Yet, despite this dissonance and limited efficacy, the script matters. As such, the underlying premise of this paper is that feminists, regardless of where located, must continue to lobby for and insist on the value and relevance of national gender policies. I nonetheless argue that while lobbying for state-based gender policies, gender advocates located within the state should be about the business of strategic circumnavigation, a circumnavigation that becomes necessary as a result of the many ways that Caribbean states fail one of the core principles of gender policies – that of social justice. This paper traverses the rhetorical terrain of the relationship that exists between Caribbean states and women. I first offer a regional overview of the ways in which the category of “gender” has been emptied of its transformative possibilities, and then argue for a cognitive turn away from efficiency models of policy formulation to ones governed by an affective analytic. For state-based advocates to think of policy through the terrain of affect, lies so far outside of current political and partisan approaches to gender policy that it may require a strategic feminist circumnavigation of the state to do so. However, I argue in this paper that

national gender policies are in dire need of a gender polity; one that in turn may help resuscitate the transformative possibilities of gender by holding the state accountable for issues of equity. My speculation in this paper is that navigating through a framework of affect may help facilitate this goal. Finally, I consider the ways that ongoing queer activism in the region may indeed offer a template of how to build such a polity.

Gender's Abduction – Finding a Home in the State

A peculiar thing happened on the English-speaking Caribbean's march to gender equity – an abduction occurred. But for the notice of a few academic feminists and activists, the state abduction of "gender" as a marker of justice and equality in the Caribbean not only occurred but went largely unreported. The *modus operandi* for this abduction has been variable, but there are a few things that we can say with certainty. We can, for example, say with some certainty that the conditions that placed "gender" on the run have exhibited striking similarities from one Caribbean territory to the other: a slow elimination of the agents intended to protect it, the eviction from its home (ministry), parried from one home to the next until too weary to evade capture; the circulation of political rhetoric that marks it as a drain on the state, as foreign, or not quite in the interest of the country's citizenry; and finally, the elimination of the needed financial support that would allow it to rectify these assaults.

So, while my musings of a state-sponsored abduction may be metaphoric, they are neither hyperbolic nor far-fetched. A simple examination of the category's gradual diminishment at the hands of state driven politics offers no shortage of evidence to this end. How else might we, for example, account for country gender status reports that begin by noting that "an analysis in 2013 revealed that GFPs (gender focal points) were "missing" from a number of ministries. It has been recommended that GFPs should be appointed to all ministries in which they are missing." (Caribbean Development Bank 2014A, 61). Or the contradiction of a gender affairs unit that has a staff complement of twenty, as reported by Antigua and Barbuda, but a budgetary allocation (2013) that was less than one

per cent (0.7%) of its host ministry's total allocation, the majority of which was earmarked as compensation (salaries, etc.), thereby increasing the difficulty of actually conducting the exercises or implementing the strategies that would help the unit fulfill its mandate of gender-just change. (Caribbean Development Bank 2014B, 55)

That gender's abduction has gone largely unnoticed is easily understood because it has been replaced by a doppelgänger, thereby allowing business to continue as usual. The political maneuverings to which "gender" has been subject, and the subsequent institutionalization of its additive doppelgänger, is now well-trod terrain among Caribbean feminists.² As such, I will not rehearse these incisive critiques, but make the following point. Many of the critiques of the institutionalization of gender in the Caribbean mark it as an "additive" process; this use of the category "additive" however, is too often treated as a descriptor and thereby, benign. I think it is important to revisit this in order to understand the category "*additive*" as a process and, therefore, dangerous.

"Additive" approaches to the formulation of gender policy in the Caribbean is a process; one that deliberately and intentionally aims to circumnavigate the complexity of gender-based inequity. This is a two-part process with a specific end goal. The first is a rhetorical move where the operationalization of gender is conflated with sex (male and female), following on from which policy makers and politicians are *then* able to argue that everyone has a "gender" (by which they mean "sex") and since this is the case, the category and the deployment of resources should address both men **and** women (both genders, by which they mean sex). Understanding additive approaches as a process rather than a description alerts us to see the rhetorical move as a kind of canary in the mine, or as an alert for or precursor of its end goal – the upward redistribution of resources, that is to say, the reallocation of state resources toward a disproportional engagement with issues of masculinity. With such an end game in mind, an overview of "gender's" trajectory throughout the region better

illustrates why an additive approach to gender is more aptly understood as a process rather than a static, though not benign, descriptor.

The 1990s marked the beginning of and subsequent surge in the use of “gender” to mark an institutional shift where the rationale for this rhetorical move was a thinly veiled articulation of what I have been pointing to as an upward redistribution of state resources. Where the category “woman” would have previously functioned as the primary signifier of state care, the 1990s marked a moment where many units made the decision to move from a “Women’s” Affairs desk, unit, bureau, or department to that of “Gender Affairs.”

Trinidad and Tobago serves as ground zero for the twin process of rhetoric and resource re-allocation, moving in 1998 from a Women’s Affairs Division to that of a Gender Affairs Division. A mere year later, we find evidence where the burden of proof for the allocation of state resources becomes masculinized. The then Minister of Gender Affairs, for example, recounted the (masculinized) burden of proof required by her cabinet colleagues to support her travel to an international conference, namely, the need to reassure them that the conference she intended to attend would address the issue of “male marginalization.”³

Saint Kitts and Nevis’ decision in 2000 to change the name of its Women’s Affairs Department to that of Gender Affairs reflected what would become the now commonplace recasting of gender as sex, declaring that the change in name “would more accurately represent the goals of gender and development with *women and men* as decision makers.”⁴ Barbados, also in 2000, made the shift to a Bureau of Gender Affairs, efficiently articulating both the recasting of gender and re-allocation of resources simultaneously in their effort to craft an institutional model that would move away from “the traditional single focus of the Women’s Bureau to wider gender issues to ensure that problems facing certain sections of the male population are systematically resolved.” (UNDP 2007). The report in which this rationale is cited went on to observe that “*This*

prioritisation of male issues demonstrates Government's commitment to the achievement of sustainable gender balance, and that it has been actively engaged in research on the gender-based issues affecting Barbadian men, including: substance abuse; men and the criminal justice system (men at risk) and parental rights" (emphasis mine). Grenada and St. Vincent were among the territories that made the change in nomenclature in 2001. Grenada implemented the Division of Gender and Family Affairs after an earlier presence as "Women's Affairs," while Saint Vincent and the Grenadines' became a Gender Affairs Division. Vested in SVG's institutional shift was the belief that it would serve to establish "*equality between women and men*, proposing socially responsive legislation and implementing policies that favourably affect women" (emphasis mine). (Caribbean Development Bank 2015, 37). In 2009, Dominica added to the growing number, becoming a Bureau of Gender Affairs in order to, among other things, give increased attention to "male gender gaps" in the society" (Caribbean Development Bank 2014A, 61). Jamaica's more recent arrival in 2016 also reflects the pairing of rhetoric and re-allocation. Jamaica announced that the Bureau of Women's Affairs would become the Bureau of Gender Affairs, noting the need for the "re-establishment of the male desk, because it is not just about us, it is not just about women. It is also about our men, particularly our young men affected by marginalisation." Each example listed here highlights what I have marked as the upward distribution of state resources -- the prioritization of masculinity under the nomenclature of gender. Each is marked by a process, where gender is first cast as sex and the resources are reallocated to ensure that both sexes receive "equal" (fiscal/policy) attention.

Taken one step further, Guyana presents an interesting twist that deepens our understanding of the processual nature of additive approaches to gender. In 2010, Guyana established a unit of "Men's Affairs." At the launch of this unit, the then President of Guyana, Bharrat Jagdeo, noted that such a unit would mitigate against the "effeminisation of men," and, further, that despite the fact that the constitution protects "people's orientation," "we don't want every young male child to start thinking that that is okay." This 2010 Men's Bureau was,

in 2016, merged with the Women's Bureau to facilitate the creation of a "Gender Affairs Bureau." On this occasion, the Head of the Women and Gender Equality Commission, Indra Chandarpal, observed:

"I don't see a problem; initially the idea of a Gender Affairs division entailed that you have two desks, one for male and one for female, we have other jurisdictions where it operates in that way. What we need to ensure however is that men's issues are also taken on board because the problems we face in society are not only female." (Fanfair 2016)

Here, Guyana offers us an example of how "gender" is used to efface "queer" in the Caribbean context. As we know, the collapsing of sex into always works to fix "gender" as a binary, and by extension, an exclusionary construct. State sponsored privileging of heteropatriarchy serves to embed an anti-queer/LGBT sentiment to the deployment of gender thereby ensuring that *queer understandings of gender* stand outside of the state, its protections and resources.

Throughout the region, "gender" has brought neither more resources nor more stability to the respective state units. What the preceding regional overview shows most clearly is that "gender" has brought "men" and additional programming for men, a portfolio that will now need to be served by the already thinly stretched staff of the former Women's Affairs unit and existing resources.⁵ By way of its quotidian deployment, the effacing effect of "gender" on women came into clear focus quite unexpectedly in Guyana's Budgetary Parliamentary Debate (2016), where, in response to the Minister of Finance's 2016 reading of the budget, Opposition Member Joseph Hamilton retorted, "...if you check all the budgets in the last 23 years you would see women were always mentioned separately. What measures are there to deal with alleviating poverty among women? All of us are aware that a lot of our children are supervised by a single parent. *This budget casts women aside and wraps them up in gender affairs.*"⁶ Whether perceiving the heft of his observation, the regional scope of its ramifications, or the systematic erosions of historical gains,

Hamilton in this parliamentary debate astutely marked what I have been marking as the danger of gender as enacted in the region.

While the use of “additive” often serves as an adjectival descriptor (the state uses an additive approach), the preceding regional overview shows the value of reading the additive as process. The preceding modes of institutionalizing gender typify a very specific process that begins with a specific set of rhetorical performances, which first aim to fix gender as a prescriptive binary, *followed or accompanied by* the reallocation of state’s resources in ways that draw on the logic of primogeniture, which then establishes a policy infrastructure and ethos that is inherently anti-LGBT/queer by virtue of the rhetorical dynamics that refuse the malleability of “gender”.⁷ Each of the rationales above justifies the state’s move from “woman” to “gender” in ways that excise concerns for structural inequality; each articulates worry that Caribbean state machinery has failed men; and, in some instances, points to womanhood and queerness as forms of inadequacy. “Gender” inhabits an ironic condition in the Caribbean in the ways that it works to normalize male hegemony; this despite its originally intended conceptualization as a pathway to redress the ways that minority subjects have been made peripheral in their national contexts. It is certainly important that we think of men as gendered, given that the liveability of women’s lives absolutely depends on this recognition; the existing gendered hierarchies of parenting, harassment, bodily safety, are, for example, all implicated in this recognition. The danger of present framings of men as gendered beings is that these discussions are increasingly framed in ways that erase how women are made vulnerable by this gendering.

Gender (Equality) Regimes, National Gender Policies, and the Promise of Gender

When “gender” travels, the various gender regimes through which it is rerouted determine what the category is able to accomplish, and more importantly, the local strategies needed to ensure that the category maintains its ability to signify *as a category of equity*. I’ve argued to this point that the category can only

signify as a mark of social change through a comprehensive, not additive, re-mapping of the boundaries and contours of a country's gender regimes and that this end goal is hampered in the Caribbean.⁸ I am using "gender equality regimes" to point to the legal, political, and social frameworks that work collectively to facilitate a favourable national context for gender equality. In this sense, gender equality regimes name the principles, core values, rules, and commitments that guide and shape the end goal of equality. They are tiered, scaled, and intersected. As much as one hopes that these tiers—international, regional, national, institutional, the community, individual (e.g., state agents, activists, disparate categories and groupings of women) – work in consort with each other, each tier introduces new contradictions and complications. Walby (2004, 10) reminds us that gender relations "are constituted by all these levels rather than there being one privileged level. As the nature of gender relations changes at all these levels, so do conceptions as to what constitutes women and men and perceptions of what might constitute their cultural, political and economic preferences and project." In this sense, gender equality regimes are also multivalent. As a result, despite the most heroic of efforts to enumerate action areas, principles for ratification, and rankings of gender equality, the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of these goals are subject to slippages in interpretation and application. For example, "gender equality" may be well framed to prioritize, let us say, the intersections of safety/bodily integrity and girlhood, which is then deemed as lacking in urgency at the national level and ignored within the community without sanction. Concerns that are articulated at one tier do not survive "intact" as they move from one sphere or constituency to the other.

Gender policies, then, by intent, are potentially instruments of re-articulation, directing attention to the multi-tiered conversations and struggles over what "equality" can mean. Yet, as discussed here, perceptions of men's structural vulnerability have now come to sharply shape the English-speaking Caribbean's contemporary gender regime. These anxieties and anger about failing and marginalized masculinity have produced an ethos where masculinity now reasserts its "rightful place" supported by the very resources that were

earmarked to make the region less patriarchal. National gender policies, therefore, as McFee (2014) notes, inhabit “an unstable, very masculinist policy domain.” McFee goes on to identify gender policies as:

“...a meta-plan for the integration of gender equality and equity concerns across and within sectors of any state machinery. This plan takes into consideration the place of governmental and non-governmental actors in its operationalization. It provides a blue print to governments’ policies for achieving gender justice, with an underlying commitment to respecting the dignity, freedoms, social, political, economic and cultural rights of all citizens.” (Ibid)

Thorough in its framing, McFee’s definition guides us toward the domains of operation, the designated implementing agents, and the guiding principles that undergird the work of national gender policies. This meta framework allows us to track some successes (e.g., the very formulation of policy, given the inability of many countries to achieve such, should be marked as a success of sorts), but also many failures and limitations (e.g., absence of high ranking ministerial advocates, inadequate budgets and personnel, diffused agenda, etc.). While Mcfee offers us a technical framework, Joycelin Massiah’s earlier framing of policy provides an important layer – that of motivation. Far from the neutral terrains suggested in the language of technical-rationality, policy settings are rife with politics and persona. Massiah, in the context of the Women in the Caribbean Project (WICP), marks this interplay of domains, tiers, and actors as “a *political process* which place a high premium on functional efficiency defined in relation to *political advantage* (emphasis mine).” Following McFee’s and Massiah’s lead, gender policies are more readily recognized as instruments that identify and establish a mandate of collective steps and strategies that should putatively bring that country closer to achieving its goal of gender equity. From this meta perspective, (gender) policy simply becomes “whatever governments choose to do or not to do.” (Dye 1998, 1). Yet, even as Massiah points toward policy as rife with the business of politics, top-down approaches, as a meta approach, are more inclined to treat policy frameworks as disembodied instruments that stand outside of culture, history, and politics.

In the realm of policy, this feigned neutrality merely masks the ways that gender regimes, themselves naturalized hierarchies, are already at work and embedded within the logic that frames the policy environment. Where gender policies exist, they offer plans, bulleted items and mandates that prescribe how various units and agents should implement even greater meta-level gender goals (CEDAW, MDGs, Belen do Para). In this layered fare, national gender policies function as both national agent and international broker, navigating the demands of the local through the imperatives of the international goals that are perceived by most citizens as originating elsewhere. While the goal of gender policies is to increase the culture of gender accountability through the naming and assignation of goals and responsibilities, it is constrained by a context of prescription without penalty. It is unsurprising, therefore, that the perceived exogenous nature of gender equality goals, unwillingness to cede gender privilege, exacerbated by its very re-inscription through the language of equality, has provided a regional impasse where there has been very little buy-in on the importance of national gender policies.

Regardless of how we list and frame our desired gender outcomes, the most meaningful dimension of any gender policy is its mandate to push beyond the existing logics and naturalized hierarchies that shape how we – women, men, queer, Indian, indigenous, African, x – relate to each other as Caribbean people. The irony of gender policy formulation is that the very absence of enforcing protocols serves to render gender policies as philosophical and ethical, if not utopic documents; yet these are the very dimensions that are often disregarded in favour of working our way down a checklist of gender equality goals. Gender policies are proclamations of a counter narrative and thus sit at the nexus of plan and vision. My pairing of plan and vision is an invitation to see rational-technical approaches to gender policy formulation as only one entry point, an approach that should be complemented, if not supplanted, with an understanding of gender policy as imaginative labour. An imagined sense of how Caribbean gender relations can be made anew, a vision of what our societies imagine of and for themselves and a “collective” agreement to become that calls for very different modes of engagement.

Above all, thinking of gender policy as imaginative labour expands how we attend to policy formulation. This modality foregrounds policy, in this instance gender policy, as a creative act of world-making.

Gender Policy as Creative World Making

The categories “affective” and “creative” are rarely, if ever, associated with “policy,” to the detriment, I would argue, to the ways that gender policy frameworks can be deployed to enliven and enhance our capabilities and worlds. What would im/possibilities present themselves to us if policy makers look not to the techno-rational prescriptions of policy but a point of departure that pursues policy as creative wonder, an opportunity to shape new worlds? At a bare minimum, if we think of gender policy as an opportunity to wonder and create, where then might our policy advocates reside? In the arts, literature, digital? The interdisciplinary ramifications that follow from the questions that I am asking cannot be pursued here, but these, too, are intriguing musings.

The citational field for affect theory is at times layered, at other points networked, and at other moments quite oppositional to each other. Such variation makes it somewhat of an imperative to map one's own location within this terrain. Gregg and Seigworth (2010, 7) offer some categorization of these various routings guided by the sphere's “initiating premises, (or) endpoints of their aims, or both.” Wending their way through phenomenology, assemblages, human/non-human interfaces, psychoanalysis, among others, the authors note that a possible “commonality” within affect's variable terrain is an effort to account for “the relational capacities that belong to the doings of bodies or are conjured by the world belongingness that gives rise to a body's doing.” This engagement with the body and the question of “belonging” are at the heart of the pursuit of the lines of flight that might exist when thinking about national gender policies and affective re-positioning.

In their overview, Gregg and Seigworth (2010) characterize feminist engagements with affect as ones that are shaped by an analysis of the

“regularly hidden-in-plain sight,” the experience of “living under the thumb of normativizing power,” as well as the “persistent repetitious practices of power can simultaneously provide a body...with predicaments and potentials for realizing a world that subsists within and exceeds the horizons and boundaries of the norm.” (Greg and Seigworth 2010).⁹ My engagement with gender policy through the lens of affect similarly foregrounds a critique of power, embodiment, and belonging, but this is only one reference point. I also want to embrace the disciplinary intransigence that shapes feminist thought by drawing on the phenomenological bent found in Sara Ahmed's (2010) work, thereby allowing us to see the act of being “affected” as an orienting device. What follows is also informed by the theoretical bent found in Ann Cvetkovich's (2012) work, which (via Raymond Williams) centres the collective and historically-structured character of what we come to ascribe as a “feeling” (as distinct from an individually possessed emotion, though collectively informed feelings do manifest at the individual level) (Cvetkovich 2012, 4). For the rest of this discussion, I want to weave these three threads – the body and its belonging in the world, orienting devices, and the structured nature of feelings – in order to create a sense of dissatisfaction with our present inclination to see national gender policy as realizable only through the auspices of the nation state or the logics of rational-technical approaches.

Arguably, the majority of Caribbean citizenry may have little sense of, or confidence in, the ways that a national gender policy will improve their daily lives. This lack of a vested constituency potentially adds to a lack of traction for gender policies within the region. However, in a region where “policy,” at best, only matters when ventriloquized through law, and is more likely experienced by the general populace as political bantering and partisanship, such apathy might not be unwarranted. Policy is rarely the locus of long-term change in the Caribbean. The idea of “policy” as distinct from the “government's position” means that gender policies are attempting to transform entrenched social hierarchies by depending on a process (the idea of “policy”) that has little track record of realizing long-term, non-partisan change in the region.¹⁰ (Thane and Thakur; Antrobus 1988, 36-54; Rowley 2004, 655-688; Hosein and Parpart 2017).

The lack of political will is often cited for the lack of movement on gender policies. Certainly, as I have discussed earlier in this paper, the lack of initial support by state managers, the ongoing constraints on budgetary and institutional support, and the ease with which “gender” becomes a veil for the resurgence of male privilege, all suggest that this is true. However, I want to think about Ahmed’s use of affect as an orienting device. Ahmed reminds us that “... to be affected by something is to evaluate that thing.” Evaluations, she goes on to note, “are expressed in how *bodies turn toward things*.” (Ahmed 2010, 23). While there is a lack of political will, the lack of interest by the larger populace, that they are oriented away from gender equity is the bigger and more damning issue.

“Policy” is not what Caribbean people orient themselves toward with the expectation of change, yet policy continues to be touted as the transformative moment and continues to be where we direct our attention while lobbying for resources and support. This emphasis turns our attention and sense of urgency toward whether we have gender focal points or the support of a given political office. These questions are certainly ones we need to be resolute about, but, given the economic constraints and political expediency of small island states, they are also questions that will remain with us for a while yet. The issue that is ahead of us is to think about the possibilities and ways that we might complicate the ongoing discourse from that of laying hold of a *gender policy* to the work of building a *gender polity*.

As gender circulates presently it is through a rhetorical and legislative framework of loss for men (e.g. male marginalization, legislation that corrects the perception of women as property) or drain (e.g. on state resources) and blame for women (e.g. too many female teachers). Gender does the work presently of saying what we do not want in our societies (e.g. men who abuse women), but we are yet to give equal and concentrated effort toward what gender can create (e.g. a desire for enhancing a range of capabilities). Orienting ourselves toward building a *gender polity* brings us into creative and imaginative

relationship with the goals and philosophical content that are at the core of whatever we refer to as a “national gender policy.”

Until a national gender policy arrives (and then beyond its arrival), how might we creatively shape our messaging, activities and programming (as distinct from ad hoc, vote driven activities) in ways that intentionally serve as a kind of gender dowsing rod aimed at bridging the distance that presently exists between the philosophical core and goals of gender policies and the population?¹¹ Ahmed is helpful in her observation that “We are moved by things [and] in being moved, we make things.” (Ahmed 2010, 25). For many feminists, the establishment of national gender policies throughout the region was seen as a promissory note, a promissory note that would hold state managers to interpretations of gender. The effort needed to realize and deliver on these promises may have contributed to our forgetting the known and potentially new constituencies to whom this note was promised. What might we make of our society if our approaches to gender justice gave some attention to building a gender polity alongside that of a gender policy? What might this gender polity demand if it were to orient itself toward the ideas that are contained within the region’s national gender policies both draft and actual? Getting Caribbean citizenry to care about gender justice requires a completely different orientation for state-based advocates themselves.

Gender justice gives us much to care about. Earlier in this paper, I pointed to the damage inflicted on regional understandings of gender equality due to masculinist co-optations of messaging and meaning. This is discursive terrain that has to be recaptured, but beyond what “gender” means is the question of what we call together *under the sign of gender*. Building broader support for issues of gender justice undoubtedly requires not a reductive or additive notion of gender but one that returns us to the wide range of issues that are made manifest “under the thumb of normativizing power,” the “regularly hidden in plain sight” if we return to Gregg and Seigworth’s (2010) characterization of feminist engagements with affect. A more dynamic, capacious, and

intersectional understanding of gender provides an opportunity to build and connect an agenda that shows how gender inequity continues to be at work in our societies, to show the ways that only a very few actually benefit from the normativising heft of inequity.

Strategically attaching “gender” to issues that can bridge the realm of justice to sentiment is critical to our reorienting processes. Let us, for example, as former enslaved and indentured individuals look at an issue that has always mattered — labour. Throughout the region, domestic workers stand among the most unprotected class of workers. According to Human Rights Watch, 26.6 per cent of women in the Caribbean are domestic workers, unpacking this reality, for example.¹² Yet Caribbean women who engage in domestic work are not recognized as workers. Compounding this invisibility are a number of other vulnerabilities: low wages, employers who refuse to pay into national insurance programmes, ageing, failing health, lack of housing for those who may have been live-in helpers, to name a few. These conditions are exacerbated for women who experience varying levels of discrimination and isolation as part of the region's internal migration pattern, for example, Guyana–Barbados/Trinidad.

In 2013, Barbados conducted a study of domestic workers as a means of beginning to build baseline indicators and to facilitate Barbados' ratification of the ILO Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189) (Cumberbatch, Georges & Hinds 2013). Underway are the needed conversations that would bring the domestic legislation in line with the requirements of the ILO Domestic Workers' Convention.¹³ Beyond this, the ratification of the Domestic Workers Convention (189) does not appear to be on the radar of the regional state, given that to date, only Guyana has ratified the Domestic Workers' Convention (ILO 2013). Certainly, there is minimum wage protection for domestic workers in Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, and Barbados (fixed separately from the general minimum wages), and the National Union of Domestic Employees (NUDE) is one of the few unions of domestic workers, started by the late Clotil Walcott in Trinidad and Tobago and now directed by the Regional Coordinator Ida Le

Blanc. The marginal status of these women makes it difficult for them to garner the recognition that is needed. Similarly, in Barbados, unions can only negotiate on behalf of a constituency after 50 per cent of the members of that domain have registered. This can be hampered and has been for a host of reasons, such as immigration status, as well as the disconnected nature of this particular line of employment, where each individual works for a separate employer, which makes it more difficult to ascertain the nature of the whole.

There are a number of irregularities facing domestic workers, much of which comes to a head when they are no longer able to work. For example, the National Insurance Board (NIB) of Trinidad and Tobago acknowledges that only fully employed citizens are eligible to receive national insurance. This makes immigrants, part-time domestics and those employed full time for whom insurance had not been paid, particularly vulnerable. The lack of job stability makes women hesitant to unionize, lest there be retribution or loss of work if found out. At present, to be seen as an “employer” in Trinidad, one needs to have employed three or more individuals. Consequently, households with one domestic worker are not seen as employers. This arrangement makes it difficult to recognize the work that domestic workers do *as work*, and it makes it difficult to hold employers accountable for any exploitation of said worker.

The question for consideration here is, how might issues such as this one be strategically identified toward building an empathetic gender polity -- a population of Caribbean citizens who insist that state managers remain accountable to the core philosophical and material goals of a gender policy? What are other issues that may have similar valence?

What, for example, of the elderly? It is estimated that 10 per cent of the population in Latin America and the Caribbean are elderly and that by 2050 it is expected this figure will increase to 25 per cent. (Social Investigations Divisions, T&T 2013). While elderly men, having worked, receive some form of post-work compensation, elderly women, by contrast, experience greater financial need

because they were more likely to have been un-, under-, or seasonally employed and, therefore, without retirement support, thereby making non-contributory pension schemes vitally important to elderly women.¹⁴ Elderly women, particularly if they were a single parent or did not work, lack social networks and savings on which they can rely, placing them at the mercy of kin and the state for the most basic of needs: food, health care, housing, and social contact. With the region's declining fertility rate presenting an inverse relationship between family size and the growth of the aging population, there is a shrinking population of young individuals to care for the members of society who are aging, thereby placing a greater burden of care on the state and civil society (e.g., churches and NGOs).¹⁵ How might we build a gender polity here?

Or, might we wish to consider the reproductive discrimination faced by young women in the Caribbean? The Caribbean accounts for some of the lowest age ranges for sex initiation, with boys beginning sexual activity at a younger age than girls. While the adolescent fertility rate in the Caribbean has fallen over time, it presently stands at 72/100,000, still fairly high. For example, 18 per cent of all births that occur in Jamaica do so to adolescents, and 15 per cent of births in Trinidad and Tobago are born to adolescent mothers (*Population and Vital Statistics Report*, 2000). Despite the prevalence of early sexual engagement by boys and girls, when young girls become pregnant, they encounter many forms of what we might refer to as reproductive discrimination.

Understanding the importance that education has played as a pathway to social mobility, how might we work to build a gender polity around the fact that, in many territories, the life chances of young girls are significantly stymied when required or, through social stigma, find it easier to leave school? How might we build a polity guided by the fact that masculinity is not required to account, if also a teenager and, too frequently, if an adult, are not reported to the police for statutory rape? There has been movement on this issue in a number of different territories, but not yet enough to fundamentally shift how we see and support young women who become pregnant.¹⁶

I have been arguing for re-orienting the region's population with a view to build a gender polity. The underlying premise of this argument is that dedicating some effort toward the formation of a polity can help circumnavigate and push against the present limits of achieving a gender policy. For illustrative purposes only, I've identified issues that are inherently gendered, that carry broad-based social urgency, which might help translate the importance of gender justice into the everyday lived realities of the region's populace in ways that take us away from the misnomer of male marginalization (as distinct from instances where different categories of men may experience discrimination). However, there are caveats. Highlighting issues that are socially urgent is important, but it is not enough to support my argument. Polities are never homogeneous and, as a result, never coherent, and navigating such is made even more difficult when the "common sense" understanding of gender that has already been brokered is of little use to any transformative or structural change. In this context, issues do matter, but so does messaging. This brings us to the third dimension of our affective turn, one that invites to think about how we structure care and regard for others through the lens of (gender) justice.

Empathy may indeed be precarious, but it is not useless. Historian Saidiya Hartman's work flags attention to empathy's "slipperiness," indeed its very "precarity," where, to consider suffering, we imagine not the one to whom suffering has been inflicted, but to a version of ourselves being subject to the same condition. Hartman notes that "We are naturally too callous to the sufferings of others, and consequently prone to look upon them with cold indifference, until, in imagination we identify ourselves with the sufferers." (Hartman 1997, 18). Her cautionary note voices concern for the ways that this other/self-substitution leads to the objectification of a suffering subject. Yet, for all of its limitations, "empathy" brings us closest to working our way out of the very quagmire that it creates.

Apathy and empathy are both brokered conditions. What we turn away from is not an accidental "oops" of history or a genetic coding of humanity. Whether

we are apathetic to the discrimination of Caribbean gender non-conforming citizens – the poor, the homeless, the elderly – is no accident. Throughout the piece I have been wrestling with imagining the kinds of new worlds we might create with our activism, policy, and legal challenges if we begin with an understanding that policy, law, and institutional framings as always already undergirded with affective states and logics – in other words, that we have feelings about these issues is, on the one hand a reflection of our individual position and on the other hand, a reflection of a social predisposition that precedes and exceeds our individual responses. These, therefore, are not merely individual emotional states, although as Cvetkovich (2012) reminds us, “the felt experience of everyday life” is certainly connected to these structured orientations (what we turn to and away from). I am, though, interested in the collective and structured affective states of public life. What are our visceral responses when we sit to consider policy, draft law, and make appointments? How do we imagine our people and their value, to themselves, the country, region and world? Do we write in ways that re-orient us to see each other as having value, or do we write to subordinate some to the right(s) of others? The failure of policy to do the former is why I want to consider how to reframe our public affective conditions: to re-write our visceral responses to how we consider and frame the “other” in public life.

This work is therefore creative, as we make anew and revolutionary, in so far as we understand “revolutionary” to mean that “what exists is something against which we should revolt.”(Ahmed 2011). It is also empathetic. Cautioned by Hartman’s (1997) critique, empathy, nonetheless and at the very minimum, turns us toward rather than away from each other and does so within an ethical framing, given that a notion of empathy sits at the heart of all ethical considerations as we regard the other. Caribbean queer activists offer instructive models on this front.

Nationalisms in their exclusionary logic have historically been marked as a conduit for the entrenchment of political power and as a “technology of

violence" (McClintock 1995)¹⁷. Positioned as alien and as a threat to the integrity of the nation state, Caribbean gender non-conforming citizens continue to re-orient the state's narrative of expulsion through both legislative and social challenges.¹⁸ This activism rests in the mercurial, "not yet" nature of citizenship, which, as Berlant (2011) reminds us

".... is a status whose definitions are always in process. it is continually being produced out of a political, rhetorical and economic struggle over who will count as "the people" and how social membership will be measured and valued."

Recent constitutional challenges have made significant inroads toward making citizenship for gender non-conforming citizens just a little bit roomier, a little less more expansive in who sings the nation. Acknowledging the difference in scale, the pursuit of gender justice and rights for sexual dissidents share interesting trajectories: both are perceived as "foreign," against the "order of things," and, therefore, positioned as inconsequential to how regional nation-states imagine themselves. Ongoing political opposition to more dynamic understandings of "gender" policy is often premised on the not so subtle grounds that such an understanding will take us to sexuality; this is a hailing to the ways that the two categories are more imbricated than Caribbean gender advocates are wont to admit, actively working instead to ensure that "gender" is deployed in ways that occlude sexuality. But what might we learn from the ways that Caribbean queer activists are scaffolding new affective ties by re-orienting and, in so doing, reimagining the region's social fabric? In answering this question, I think it is important to be clear that affect takes us not to a place of "feeling good about" but rather orienting us toward what needs to be seen. The labour that Caribbean queer activists invest in reorienting Caribbean societies toward what must be seen is what I am offering as having heuristic possibilities, particularly for gender advocates who are state based.

The gay rights organization CAISO and its co-founder, Colin Robinson, give us a number of hints on the value of and sociopolitical merits of massaging the

affective boundaries of activist work. Remember that I appeal to affect for three reasons: to re-frame our understanding of what we deem “valuable,” to challenge the normativising hold of existing power relations and, in the process of reorienting what we consider of value, to imagine different and reconfigured communities of care. Drawing on Gosine’s (2015) “CAISO, CAISO,” I want to highlight three moves that CAISO makes that are illustrative of the argument that I am offering here: they commandeer political messaging; they appeal to a historically derived and “homegrown” sense of “fair play”; and they draw on the recognizable cultural symbols to engineer queer intelligibility. What might these three moves offer, if translated to the work of making “gender” legible within the everyday? How might these three moves expand, shift, redirect the work presently being done by those who are labouring toward gender equity.

From the organization’s motto, “making sexual and gender diversity part of T&T’s national identity,” to Robinson’s own feminist nationalist politic, Gosine’s piece highlights the layers with which CAISO and Robinson deliberately take on what “nationalism” must come to mean, its “not yet.” Completely cognizant of the heteropatriarchal impulses that drive nationalist desires, CAISO shows a savvy understanding of the role that nationalism plays in the self-determination of recently independent small-island states and, rather than dismiss this, they creatively reimagine it. Whereas earlier Caribbean queer theorizing started from the identity of a “gender outlaw,” CAISO refuses expulsion and meets this desire with a gnawing insistence that Caribbean nation-states are already queer because members of their citizenry are queer.

At the core of this re-imaginative work is a vision of nationalist discourse that has a social justice script embedded within it. The organization’s name, CAISO, which plays in the Trinidadian musical art form of calypso, their activism which draws on culturally recognizable and loved ephemera, such as the Crix biscuit, is part of the imaginative work which draws on Trinidad and Tobago’s love of double entendre, word play, and humour in order to render a recognizability to queerness. This imaginative work on the one hand renders the estranged as

familiar and familial and, on the other, it deploys the ordinary (What can be more ordinary than Crix?) toward the achievement of the extraordinary or not yet imagined rights.

The creative dimension of this orienting field is such that, as we make our way toward the attainment of legal and social recognition for gender and sexual minorities, we invariably change the very terrain that we traverse. Thinking creatively around what makes queerness/gender intelligible is needed in order to build a polity that is informed by an empathetic relationship with those who face discrimination. Returning to the need to build a gender polity alongside of, and because of the glacial pace with which policy is being considered, I find myself thinking about strategies that will signal to our citizenry that gender policies matter to the possibilities of their everyday lives. In this vein, I find myself wondering about what a feminist midnight robber might have to say about respecting women's personal space at Carnival? Or, alternatively, how might a national primary school competition drawing on this medium gradually build a new ethos nationally? A battle of words and wits of extempo, the lyrical dexterity of dancehall, national school debates where the issues at hand are issues of social justice, art (all media), weekly talk shows that provide new ways to talk about old issues – the creative world making possibilities toward building a gender polity are endless, and promising.

I have asked us to be mindful of the ways that “gender” has been emptied of its capacity for transformation. Its interpretation and application have been gutted of its ability to call out the power differentials that exist in the region, leading to a condition where everything to which it is subsequently appended in like manner becomes anaemic – gender policy, gender justice, gender equity. But this thought piece has been no eulogy. Rather, it is a resuscitative realignment. While the last twenty years have marked the ongoing assertion of male privilege, political placement on the state's periphery and subsequent divestment of the state's interest in gender as a tool of transformation, I maintain that thinking through a gender critique is still an important placeholder for change. The

messaging that shapes how we understand the possibilities of “gender justice” has gone somewhat awry, the present preoccupation with having the “correct” definition, by which is meant not sexuality, means that work needs to be done within and external to the state to reclaim the category’s transformative possibilities. While I maintain the importance of state action toward the establishment of well-thought functioning gender policy, partisan inspired conservatism continues to leave me less than optimistic. To this end, I have argued for the importance of building a gender polity alongside of the need for a gender policy. If those charged with gender policies cannot fully articulate why justice (before focal points and definitions) matters, why should we expect the general population to make those connections or hold leaders accountable? The optimism that instigates this project is a utopic desire that sits at the core of collectively unlearning privilege, hence my appeal to affect for language and ways of thinking about how one might build new social neural pathways to equity and justice.

I want to end by way of a few caveats. The creative thought processes needed to begin to shape a gender policy do not translate into ease or homogeneity. As Ahmed cleverly reminds us,

“We cannot even assume that those who appear directed “in the right way” feel the same way about the direction they are facing.” We should, therefore, in all fairness, ask why should we change course to one that incurs cost, to one that is an uphill climb and offers no guarantees? My appeal to affect does not suggest “success” or the emergence of “good feelings” about justice; it is merely intended to strategize toward something other than political indifference, and further, to strategize toward an ethos of justice that emerges out of community. My hopefulness in the face of apathy rests in what Greg and Seigworth (2010, 12) refer to as “a generative, pedagogic nudge aimed toward a body’s becoming an ever more worldly sensitive interface, toward a style of being present to the struggles of our time.”

This pedagogic nudge, through law and a sociocultural scaffolding of queer intelligibility, is one that we see already at work in the queer activism that is in play in the region, the irony of which is that while the work of gender is too often deployed to efface queer, it is in this space that gender justice, both as policy and polity, has its best resuscitative hope.

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¹ While Beijing remains a pivotal citation in the global circulation of gender as a category of social change, its momentum and capacity to energize globally happened as a result of gender's placement within a newly consolidating infrastructure established to facilitate gender equity globally. This infrastructure would have included, for example, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, adopted in 1979, The UN World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna (1993), The International Conference for Population and Development (1994). Additionally, the Gender Development Index and the Gender Empowerment Measure, both also unveiled in 1995, further marshalled attention to the category of gender and brought a new level of interrogation to the nation state itself, given that what the Index and Measure now allowed for was quantifiable and comparative scrutiny.

² For a broader discussion, see, for example, Barriteau (2000, 2003).

³ The former Minister observed, "I remember I was going to a meeting in India, I think in 1999, and there were a number of issues that we were going to discuss in India and there was opposition to my going to India. But ...when I talked about the males, because we were going to deal with that thesis on male marginalization... When I mentioned that, in fact not only did I have to mention it, I had to bring documentary evidence that the male marginalization thesis was being addressed in India... that allowed me to go." (Interview with former Minister of Gender Affairs March 10, 2002) *Feminist Advocacy*, Michelle V Rowley, 75.

⁴ "Concluding Comments of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women: Saint Kitts and Nevis" Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, Twenty-Seventh Session. 3-21 June, 2002. Excerpt Supplement No. 38 (A/57/38). P.1

⁵ At the time of writing this paper, the Facebook page of the newly formed Gender and Child Affairs in the Office of the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago had issued three calls for training of the general populace. The first, "Women in Harmony Program," targets single female heads of household; the objectives are not stated. The second, "Defining Masculine Excellence Program," which targets males 14+; the objectives are not stated. The third, "Food Preparation and Home Management for Men and Boys Program," the latter targets males from 9-99; the objectives, beyond what is implied in the title, are not stated.

<https://www.facebook.com/genderaffairsdivision/photos/a.291335020982563.66376.291114284337970/1009116685871056/?type=3&theater> accessed Jul 06, 2016.

⁶ 24th Sitting of The Eleventh Parliament of Guyana Under The Constitution of The Co-Operative Republic Of Guyana. February 8, 2016. Emphasis mine.

⁷ See Jacqui Alexander's (1997) discussion where, in the context of domestic violence legislation, she explores the ways that state manipulation of sex and gender lies "at the juncture of the disciplining of the body and the control of the population and are therefore constitutive of those very practices." I am also indebted here to her thinking on the use of "primogeniture" as a way of marking the reassertion of patriarchal privilege within state mechanisms.

⁸ Nuket (2002, 413) acknowledges the importance of attending to the "legal instruments and compliance mechanisms" of gender equality mandates, but concludes that what is needed going forward are more "systematic case studies on how and under what conditions global gender equality norms are being implemented across the world. This paper attempts to respond to these localized complexities.

⁹ See also Ahmed (2010), Cvetkovich (2012) and Barad (2015, 387-422).

¹⁰ See, for example, Thame and Thakur's "The National Policy on Gender Equality of Jamaica: (En)gendering Equity in Neoliberal Times" discussion of the structural limitations of gender equality in Jamaica. Their interviews with a various state agents show that many of the limitations that agencies experienced at their inception (limited or no budget, staff, etc.) continue to exist. See also, Antrobus (1988, 36-54), Rowley (2004, 655-688) and Hosein and Parpart (2017).

¹¹ A dowsing or divining rod was used as a tool of divination. Dowsing (also divining or witching) rods were invested with the power to direct diviners toward buried water, metals, ores, etc. I purposefully invoke this metaphor in the context of a "gender dowsing rod" in keeping with Ahmed's notion of affect as an orienting device. What new forms of messaging might we need to build support for the promised change of gender policies, how do we orient our populations "toward gender"? Equally as interesting is the materiality of dowsing. Dowsing was deemed magical because the diviner possessed the ability to find, to unearth the unseen and the unknowable without the use of scientific apparatus. If gender justice is our buried ore, then without the technical apparatus of policy, what kind of imaginative work lies ahead in terms of unearthing interest in and regard for the goal of gender justice?

¹² <https://www.hrw.org/report/2013/10/27/claiming-rights/domestic-workers-movements-and-global-advances-labor-reform>

¹³ See <http://www.ituc-csi.org/spotlight-interview-with-toni?lang=en>

¹⁴ See, for example, National Report Implementation of the Brasilia Declaration, Grenada, UNECLAC p. 10.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ This form of discrimination came to a head in 2009 in Antigua when there was an attempt to amend the Education Act to bar pregnant girls from continuing with their education. The opposition that resulted, including from the state-sponsored gender unit, caused the proposal to be pulled. Dominica and Jamaica stand as two examples where a policy position has been implemented to protect girls from this form of discrimination. Dominica stands as an anomaly in that it amended the Education Act (1997) to ensure that girls return to school after pregnancy. In 2013, Jamaica launched its National Policy for the Re-Integration of School-Aged Mothers into the Formal School System. One of the provisions of the policy is that a space must be retained within the school system for the student. This is without negotiation. It may or may not be at the same school, but return is guaranteed. See "National Policy: Reintegration of School-Age Mothers into the Formal School System": moe.gov.jm and <http://programmeforadolescentmothers.webs.com/>

¹⁷ See also Jasbir Puar (2007) and Gosine (2015, 859-894).

¹⁸ *Orozco v AG of Belize* (2016), *Maurice Tomlinson v The State of Belize and Trinidad and Tobago* (2016) and ongoing *McEwan et. al. v AG of Guyana* have met with varying levels of success, however, each carves some inroad toward queer intelligibility.



Silence, Invisibility and Social Policy: Putting the Pieces Together with HIV positive youth

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Abstract

This paper examines the lived experiences of silence, secrecy and invisibility for HIV positive -young people, as identified by youth researchers partnering with a social worker in youth participatory action research (YPAR). The paper draws on a study that examined HIV disclosure for young people. Disclosure is primarily conceptualized as an act of telling, a risk-laden endeavour with perceived detrimental consequences for people living with HIV. Through youth-led data analysis, the social work researcher partnered with youth collaborators to interrogate interview data as well as data produced from a photovoice element of the study. Examinations of the impact of HIV on youth have characteristically treated young people as mutually exclusive sub-populations, namely youth who are HIV negative, youth who are perinatally infected and youth who have contracted HIV through sexual contact. These categories however ignore the reality that these sub-populations form integral parts of each other's social world. The study engaged youth across these categories to collaboratively investigate disclosure for HIV positive youth. The study findings unmasked various oppressive structures at the core of risk and vulnerability for young people. Among the key findings is the extensive ways in which structural vulnerability impacts the lives of HIV positive youth. It is argued that addressing the vulnerability faced by young people living with HIV has to begin by addressing the ways in which policy makers, service providers and caregivers fail to see young people as knowing and capable agents. Furthermore, the first step towards remedying this deficit is the inclusion of young people in participatory democratic processes that value self-determination and treat young citizens in non-tokenistic ways.

Keywords: social policy, HIV, vulnerability, Caribbean, youth

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Introduction

Qualitative action-oriented social work research presents an opportunity to engage the recipients of social policies in a way that connects them with the many actors involved in social policy formulation and implementation. The symbiotic possibilities between qualitative social science research and policy can draw on in-depth understandings of sexuality and gender as social constructions and transform risk environments (Barrow, 71). Furthermore, by pushing participatory governance beyond consultation, collaborative action-oriented research can engage policy recipients in meaningful ways that privilege them as experts of their lived experience. Young people, often marginalized in multiple ecological systems, are usually deemed most in need of social welfare, and the Caribbean is no exception to this phenomenon. For young people, these needs can include a range of areas, from prevention, to access to care and treatment and anti-discriminatory protections. In this region, adult circles of care craft the agenda of “needs” for young people which characteristically exclude meaningful participation in the domain of social and health policy.

Despite research around the social constructions of sexuality, risk and decision-making in the context of HIV in the Caribbean, social policy continues to move ahead without regard for extant qualitative research data. The region’s experience of HIV/AIDS led to a number of studies that investigated HIV risk, vulnerability and the related psychosocial experiences of youth (Barrow 2006; Christie et al. 2001; Chevannes and Gayle 2000; CARICOM 2010); that said, there are few non-medical studies that have focused on HIV positive youth and none that have engaged HIV positive youth in empirical collaborative research. Instead, the research agenda has been dominated by quantitative surveillance studies with mandates of calculating HIV prevalence rates primarily among men who have sex with men, female sex workers and drug users. Although youth are included as a vulnerable population in numerous national HIV strategic plans (NACC 2010, 2015), there are no comparative research efforts to understand the experience of young people. Furthermore, as governmental priorities have

shifted toward “test and treat” approaches which aim to get all persons testing positive for HIV immediately on antiretroviral drugs, policy formulation now seems geared towards testing, access to treatment and drug adherence. As the Caribbean enters another era of HIV programming, young people find themselves in a familiar blind spot - where policy priorities are not informed by their needs.

This paper discusses the needs of HIV positive young people specifically around HIV disclosure and psychosocial support. Through the use of participatory action research with two cohorts of young people, youth voices and lens articulate their need to be engaged with as knowing and capable individuals by caregivers, service providers and policymakers. The research literature tends to examine HIV positive youth as a manifestation of a mode of HIV transmission. The perinatally-infected young people are usually imaged as the ‘innocent’ victims while young people who are exposed to HIV via sexual contact are imaged as those missed by prevention efforts. Young people are rarely studied from a strengths or competency-base. There have been movements from the one-dimensional depiction of young people as synonymous with risk in the international research literature (Sharland 2006; Ginwright 2009; Ginwright and James 2002; Fine 2008). The Caribbean regional literature however has not followed suit. While there has been some progress in the arena of governance, youth participation in research has been minimal.

Participants in this study include HIV positive young people who have contracted the infection perinatally, through sexual contact as well as HIV negative young people. What does HIV disclosure have to do with HIV negative youth? Programmatic agendas and policy are increasingly fueled by the global goal of an HIV-free generation (UNAIDS 2012); if we are working toward a HIV-free generation it is imperative that all youth become involved in research and action around HIV. The realities of our social existence are bounded by integrated interactions and mutual dependency. Sub-populations of youth do not function in society as discrete groups, hence programming and research

endeavours that treat with them this way have inherent limitations. The composition of the research participants and the methodological approach to this study are original contributions to the literature.

Study Background

Empirical research in the region has increasingly evidenced that living with HIV essentially has two categories of experiences: one marked by biological manifestations and the other by sociocultural and psychosocial dynamics. Some of the hallmarks of this latter category have been stigma, discrimination and prejudice in the spheres of health care and social settings. However, these studies have not sought to extrapolate how young people see themselves in the epidemic nor how they negotiate their social world. In these studies, young people have been the subject and often times the object of research; however, they have not been conceived as partners in the research process. The experience of being a young person in this era of the HIV and the experience of being an HIV positive young person are unique developmental experiences. As such, youth-driven research which privileges the voices of young people can capture nuanced aspects of their experiences which cannot be readily gathered by adult researchers.

An underlying objective of this study was to build knowledge from the experiences of young people living with HIV (YPLWH) instead of research **about** their experience. The larger study worked to engage the following research questions:

- How do HIV positive young people perceive the impact of disclosure of their status on their psychosocial wellbeing?
- How can the process of collaboratively engaging youth in qualitative research build youth advocacy skills around HIV and produce new ways of understanding the implications of HIV for young persons?

The terms “youth”, “young people” and “adolescent” are often used interchangeably in the literature. The vast majority of programmatic and policy measures implemented by Caribbean governments have adhered to the CARICOM Commission on Youth Development (2010) definition of 15-29 to categorize young people. This age range is based on the assumption that employability is a marker of adulthood, which in the Caribbean is a key indicator of the readiness for adult status (Carter 2008). In a literature review on the situation of youth in the Caribbean commissioned by CARICOM and UNICEF, Bailey and Charles (2008) caution that collapsing different developmental stages into one age group category risks “mask[ing] the needs and subjectivities of each stage of development and may result in the design of interventions that are not as sharply differentiated as they could and need to be” (10). In this study, youth are considered between the ages of 15-29 concurring with Carter’s (2008) assertion that a Caribbean youth research agenda should meet the “accepted international definition of youth as the age group 15-24 while satisfying the data requirements for policy formulation based on the definition used by Caribbean governments” (6).

Notions of vulnerability and risk are prominent in the research literature addressing Caribbean youth. To some extent this image does not significantly differ from global images of young people. The notion that youth are to be cared for and protected from other people, but moreover from themselves, is steeped in the research literature. Caribbean youth however carry another distinctive mark– that of the region’s history of violence and oppression. Combine these elements with an HIV diagnosis and what emerges at the intersection of these marginalized identities is a sub-population of young people portrayed as HIV victims and vectors.

Moving from Risk-Frameworks

In the social sciences tradition, the investigation of risk behaviours in adolescence is as seminal as the study of adolescence itself. From Hall’s (1904) classification of “storm and stress”, adolescence has continued to be articulated

as that developmental period of risk behaviours. While the framework of “risk” and “risk-taking” has utility for understanding dimensions of the functioning of young people, many scholars question the assumptions upon which it is set and therefore its’ conceptual validity. Sharland (2006) denotes that “youth is risky business” and suggests that the notion of “youth at risk” may be a misnomer, arguing that risk might be better conceptualized as part of the natural trajectory of being young as opposed to a series of maladaptive features. A re-engagement with youth without the stigma of “at- risk” begs a youth perspective on social problems as opposed to an adult perspective. If we apply Spector and Kitsuse’s (1977) classic definition of the social construction of social problems, it would follow that ‘risk’ emerges as a defining feature of youth as a social problem because adult claim-makers have deemed it so. In essence, this “risk” narrative illustrates adult perspectives and perhaps serves their needs for generativity.

Youth in the Caribbean

The marginalization of young people in the Caribbean is historically anchored in core social and cultural formulations about the position of young people in family and societal systemic arrangements (Lewis and Carter 1995; World Bank 2003). Psychosocial dynamics involved in the daily transactions among young people must be understood in light of these historical and social dimensions of their experiences. Research evidence supports authoritarian Caribbean parenting practices that “emphasize the supremacy of the parent and the subordination of the child” (Lashley 2000, 210). This adult hegemony has been observed “across socioeconomic groups... [in the Caribbean] parents value a punitive restrictive to discipline and childrearing... obedience and docility is valued especially for girls” (Evans and Rose 1997, 5).

Williams’ (2001a) study of Jamaican youth and violence, addressing the historical context of youth in the Caribbean, argues that “youth” as a socially constructed concept did not exist in the Caribbean prior to the emancipation of the enslaved Africans. Williams highlights that during African enslavement

childhood and youth were indistinguishable from adulthood since individuals in all three groupings shared the commonality of labour force membership. As a socially constructed concept, what it means to be young must be rooted in an understanding of the requisite historical and social conditions. These conditions give context to the temporal and spatial environment that shape the developmental experiences of being young. Williams points out that one cannot speak to the Caribbean adolescent without speaking to the historical context of violence, labour exploitation and its impact on the structure and function of family in the Caribbean. This forces us to understand Caribbean adolescence as having a historical antecedent of the position of “child” in “slave societies” subject to the violent punishments that were meted out to them. Williams links authoritarian discipline, powerlessness and violence as foundational to the developmental experiences of the child in this context. Furthermore it is this historical context that sets the stage for the values around adolescence in contemporary Caribbean societies.

Bailey and Charles (2008) situate the Caribbean social context for youth in the context of global development by highlighting that the end of the Cold War signified a loss of geo-political importance of the region. Reflecting on the implications of this loss for the realities faced by contemporary youth, Bailey and Charles surmise that “Caribbean youth issues have emerged during these volatile conditions and the lives of Caribbean youth reflect the socio-political, economic and cultural pressures faced by the region” (18). In addition to the negative impact of global economic trends on the economies of Caribbean states, changes in political paradigms have also pushed the region into disequilibrium. The aggregate effect has “coalesced to create a situation in which the wellbeing of youth is potentially compromised” (18). Such literature frames the environment of Caribbean youth and points to the vulnerabilities for young people.

In the Caribbean context, Brathwaite (2009) summarizes that “youth risks emerge as liabilities and not assets” (2). The implications of seeing youth

primarily from a risk perspective is the tendency of social policy to seek to adopt a protective stance towards young people. The preoccupation with saving youth and keeping them safe continues to drive welfare initiatives. Caribbean scholars (Williams 2001b; Lewis and Carter 1995) have presented arguments related to how moral panics function on a societal level to heighten levels of fear and anxiety around youth. In addition to being perceived as being problematic, Caribbean youth are overwhelmingly imaged and imagined as powerless and overwhelmed with their social and political condition. Deosaran (1992) describes the situation of young people in the Caribbean as a condition of “hopes and broken promises” since youth policy manifestos characteristically do not translate into any value or action for their identified beneficiaries (66).

There has been a small measure of research conducted in the Caribbean which privileged youth voices and situated understandings of adolescent experiences (Brathwaite 2009; Commission on Youth Development 2010; Gayle 2009). The conceptualizations of young people as rights-wheeling citizens are alien to core cultural conceptualizations of youth (Jones 2007). Jones' (2007) study draws on qualitative interviews with street children in Trinidad and Tobago and employs feminist intersectional analysis. Jones contends that hegemonic discourses on risk and vulnerability have been unable to translate into social action for marginalized youth and furthermore children's rights continue to be overlooked. The propagation of youth policies and Caribbean governments' statuses as signatories to regional and international conventions appear conciliatory and without cultural significance.

Marginalization of Caribbean Youth in Health Research

A misalignment between intentionality and practice is also evidenced in the lack of congruity between the HIV/AIDS research agenda in the region and the needs which it seeks to meet. The region's research agenda is fueled by quantitative epidemiological and health economic outlooks, while the drivers of the epidemic continue to be social factors (Barrow 2005). Quantitative survey research has provided valuable data on sexual and reproductive health

behaviours and practices and in so doing filled critical knowledge gaps and informed policy. Nevertheless, it has done so at the cost of further stigmatizing and stereotyping specific social groupings as “at risk” or “deviant” (Barrow 2005). Youth populations have become synonymous with “at risk”, while the structural vulnerabilities and sexual cultures that under-grid social arrangements that dispose youth to risk continue to be understudied (Burrow 2005). A move away from the dissemination of “shocking facts on unsafe sexual practices” among youth towards the production of models of behaviour change that engage with youth and seek to understand their world views is the way forward. Barrow's (2006, 2009) argument that social science research has been marginalized as well as her call for in-depth, qualitative understandings of the cognitive, emotional and behavioural world of young people in the Caribbean clearly sets forth a research agenda for the region.

A review of the literature evidences gaps in knowledge and praxis in social science and social action. Our HIV research agenda has not produced adequate understandings of the environments and vulnerabilities that youth negotiate in Caribbean settings. Secondly, while there has been weighed discourses on the implications of HIV for perinatally-infected and behaviourally-infected young people, the only research agenda for HIV negative youth is a prevention agenda. The literature speaks to prevention, risk and vulnerability but researchers have not probed how HIV as a social phenomenon has affected the psychosocial functioning of the HIV negative young person. There has been a growing movement towards understanding structural inequities and other drivers of HIV risk in the Caribbean with specific reference to complex sexuality and gendered power relations (Barrow, de Bruin and Carr 2009; Kempadoo 2006). These contributions have significantly advanced the discourse on HIV as a social phenomenon embedded in structural vulnerability and marginalization. However, there is a blatant need for Caribbean research that seeks to build praxis that can support youth infected and affected by HIV.

Participatory Action Research

Participatory action research studies are messy, cyclical endeavours that require reflexivity and constant re-engagement with the emerging data. According to Herr and Anderson (2005) most traditions of action research concur on five goals, (a) the generation of new knowledge, (b) the achievement of action-oriented outcomes, (c) the education of both researcher and participants, (d) results that are relevant to the local setting and (e) a sound and appropriate research methodology (55). O'Leary's (2004) cycle of action research was used as the methodological framework for the study.

The study began with six in-depth interviews which I conducted with HIV positive youth aged between 16 and 22. The question that initiated the second research cycle was "How could the HIV positive youth people be engaged with as a group of co-researchers?" While the participants were willing to engage in individual interviews, they were tentative about interacting as a group. Participating in analysing transcript data that they produced would entail a high level of emotional exposure. There would be significant ethical implications for confidentiality and anonymity.

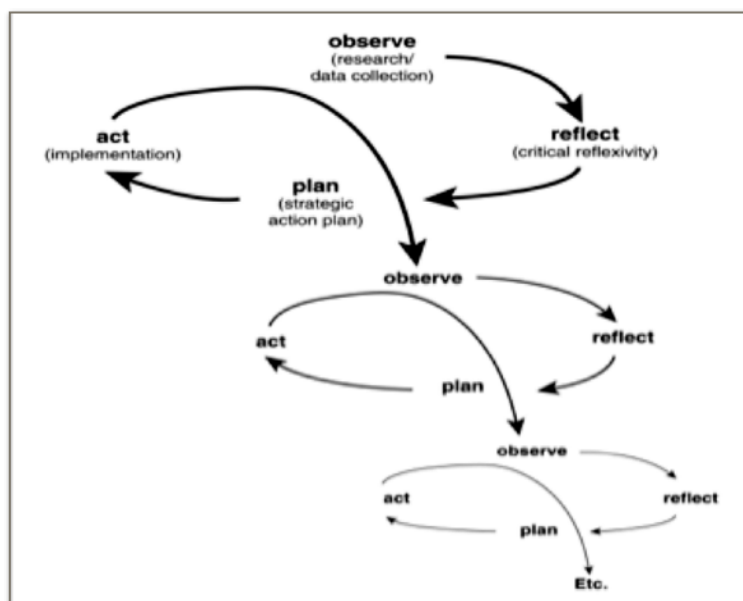


Figure 1: Cycles of Action Research, O'Leary (2004, 141)

The second research cycle was engaged with the inclusion of another cohort of youth people. These youth researchers were recruited from various youth organizations through poster advertisements in both Tobago and Trinidad. The six interview transcripts were cleaned and anonymized and two groups of youth researchers (one based in

Tobago and another based in Trinidad) were trained in qualitative data analysis. These youth researchers analyzed the transcripts and produced a grounded theory. They chose to film a 17-minute documentary to disseminate their findings and share how this experience impacted their understandings of HIV among young people.

With the completion of the second cycle I returned to the original interviews to explore my sense of a lack of reciprocity for the HIV positive youth. Wary of recreating a power dynamic where HIV positive participants benefit the least from an experience which essentially begun with them, I returned to the three standard questions posed to all HIV positive youth towards the close of their in-depth interviews:

- What are you feeling right now about talking to me about telling your HIV status?
- What did you consider before agreeing to take part in this interview?
- Why did you agree to speak with me?

All of the HIV positive youth indicated that they experienced intense anxiety while contemplating participation in the interview; however by the end of the interview this anxiety had dissipated. Throughout the data analysis, the young researchers also articulated their observation of a thematic dichotomy. While there was a fear of being seen/ known, the act of being seen and known brought some measure of comfort and met a need that the HIV positive youth struggled to articulate.

On one hand the HIV positive youth overwhelmingly indicated trepidation at the notion of being associated with the study, which translated into being associated with HIV infection. Fear of breach of confidentiality was pronounced, yet, during the interview, verbally and non-verbally, each participant indicated “feeling better” when the interview was completed. A nineteen-year-old participant during his in-depth interview summarized as follows,

Sometimes it just feels better letting out. Most times I just keep things inside and don't talk. I have plenty problems and ... nobody, really knows about it. I don't like to talk about my problems, specially about this, but sometimes you just feel relief after. (pauses) Right now I ain't feeling insecure again...

Each indicated that the interview experience made them “feel better”. This feeling emerged from being witnessed or seen and it brought emotional comfort. Photovoice² was the strategy to manage a core dilemma of the study. How does one engage HIV positive young people in research without making them vulnerable?

My third research cycle saw the re-engagement with the HIV positive youth who were initially interviewed. Five of six persons initially interviewed agreed to participate in a photovoice project. All of the young people involved in the study attended the photovoice exhibition. As such this study drew on a number of data sets to lend a dynamic, multi-layered analysis of the phenomenon under study.

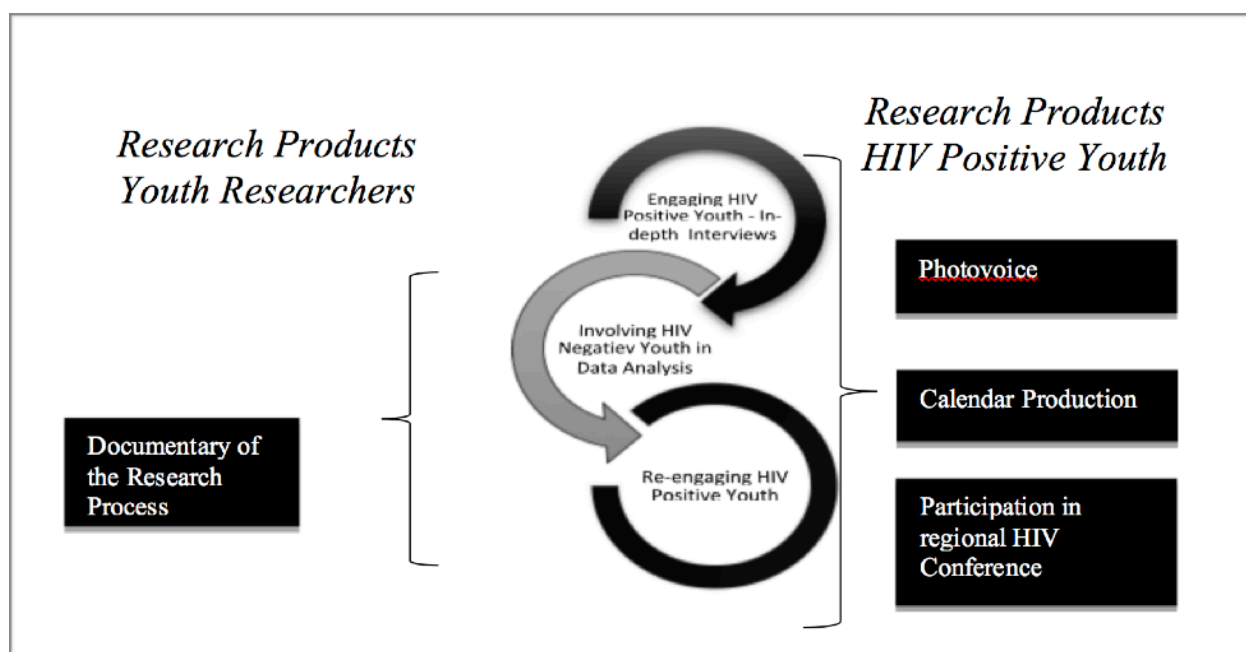


Figure 2: Iterative Cycles of Inquiry

Youth Collaborators

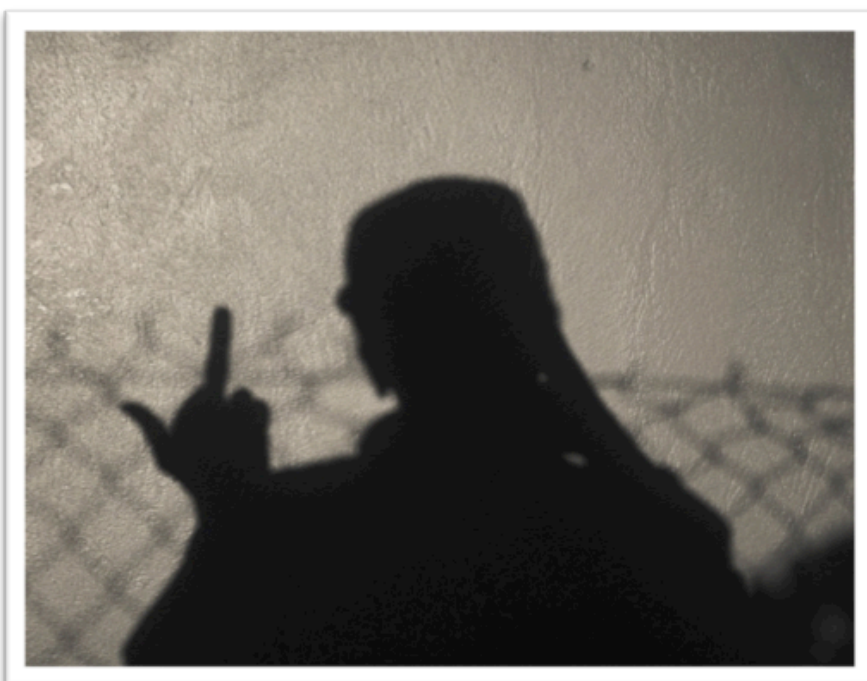


Figure 3: Promotional Flyer for Photovoice Exhibition

Case Summaries – HIV Positive Young Persons

Matters is a 19-year-old male, interviewed at his home where he lived with his grandmother and older brother. I was taken to his grandmother's residence by a nurse (the referring service provider) who scheduled the delivery of his medication and the interview on the same day. As the three of us sat in the verandah adjacent to the street, the nurse discussed restarting daily vitamins to get reacquainted with a medication regimen and a subsequent transition to

antiretroviral drugs. Matters took the medicine from her and mumbled under his breath that he would take the medication this time. I was introduced by the nurse and began to relay information about the study. Matters was hesitant to agree to participate in the study. He explained that persons frequently walked up and down the street and that we may need to lower our voices and 'just be cool' so that they would not know. I agreed.



Sometimes it feels like
the world is against
me and this is my
response.

Figure 4: Self-Portrait by Matters

Matters was perinatally infected and his mother subsequently died due to an HIV- related illness when he was two-years old. The deep nostalgia for his mother was palpable and during the interview, he volunteered a picture of his mother on his mobile phone. It was a photograph he took of an actual photograph. He lamented that while there were photographs of his mother and older brother, there is no evidence that she was in his (Matters') life. Being unemployed was another stressor for Matters as he indicated that he could not work because of his health and was very self-conscious about the appearance of his skin which was scarred as a result of his illness. During the interview, he frequently outlined ways in which HIV prevented him from being 'normal'. Matters reported his belief that HIV 'robbed' him of his youth and made him

'different' from other young people. Only his family members were aware of his status; he revealed that he was most fearful of his peers and 'any woman' learning of his status.

Cindy was a 15-year-old female referred by a nurse at an antenatal clinic. The in-depth interview took place in the living room of her mother's home where she lived with her mother, older sister and four-month old baby. The baby was lying next to her on a couch, while I sat across from her on a single chair for the duration of the interview. The referring nurse introduced me to Cindy and left shortly after. Cindy's mother was not at home and I was introduced to her sister as a social worker. Cindy contracted the virus from her first and only sexual relationship with a 20-year-old man with whom she is no longer involved. She lived with her mother all her life and at the time of the interview, knew about her status for about one year. As we were about to begin the interview, Cindy indicated that she was very apprehensive and uncertain that she wanted to participate; she conveyed that speaking about 'it' was difficult and she avoided it as much as possible. With a shrug of her shoulders she agreed to be interviewed and we sat in silence for about 15 minutes. Cindy eventually broke the silence and said "ok, go on". Although she agreed to speak with me, she was brief and hesitant to respond.

Cindy tested three times for HIV before she received her diagnosis. On the first occasion, she did not remain at the site to receive confirmation of the results. Her recollection of the second occasion on which she took an HIV test was unclear, but she recalled being told that the test result was positive and required a confirmatory test. On this occasion, Cindy reported that while she was waiting for confirmation in the clinic waiting room, she perceived that other persons in the waiting room knew her status owing to the manner in which the nurse spoke to her. Cindy left the Health Centre before the nurse returned with the confirmation. Some two months later, Cindy learned that she was five months pregnant. It was at this time that she definitively learned of her status. She has adhered to her treatment regime, and was awaiting postnatal medical

confirmation to determine the status of her daughter. She reported that she often prayed that the baby would be negative. Cindy was fearful of disclosure and withheld her status from everyone with the exception of her mother and the father of her child. Her sister, who lived with her and was present in the one-bedroom home at the time of the interview, was unaware of her status. On two occasions during the interview, her sister walked into the room where the two of us sat, on her way to the kitchen. When this occurred she nodded towards me and we stopped speaking until her sister returned to the bedroom. Cindy declined the invitation to participate in the photovoice project.

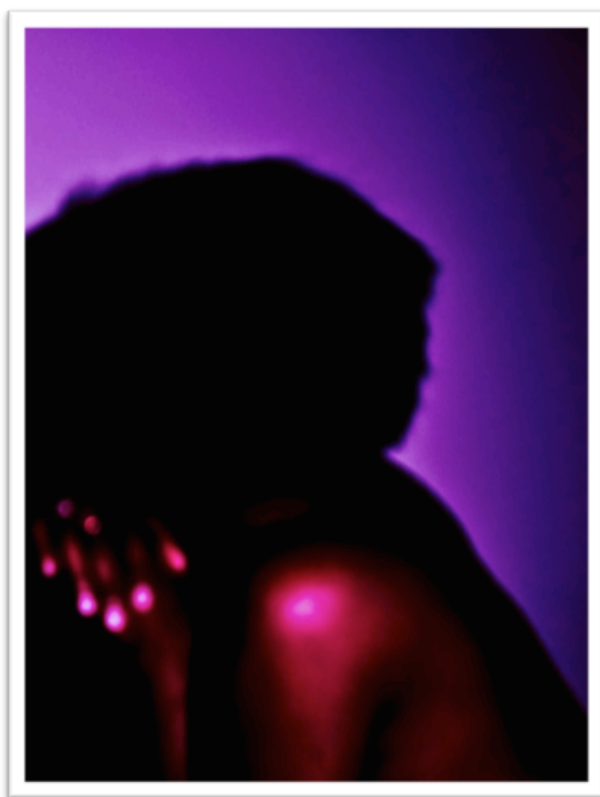


Figure 5: Self Portrait by Leila

I am 24, short and loving. I have been diagnosed for more than five years. My life has changed dramatically and at times can be trying and unfair. All I ask is to be treated the same as every living person in the world. All I wants is to teach the world to love, care and feels for us living with HIV.

Leila was a 22-year old female who was referred by a social service provider. Leila was not hesitant about the interview and begun speaking about her status immediately. She spoke avidly about how her status was disclosed to her and her recent disclosure to her boyfriend. I stopped her and asked that we go through the consent forms before we began.

Leila contracted HIV from a previous boyfriend with whom she had a relationship for two years. This boyfriend subsequently died as a result of AIDS-related complications brought on by non-compliance to ARV medications. Leila confronted him on one occasion before he died at which time he denied that he transmitted the virus to her and denied that he was infected. She learned of his status through rumours which were circulated at the place in which she was employed at that time. Since Leila learned of her status, she has worked arduously at maintaining a positive outlook on life. She lived with a large family and all of the adults in the home were aware of her status while the children suspected that she was ill. The family has colluded to withhold her status from her father who does not live in the family home but maintains a close relationship with the family and visits often. Leila reported experiences of subtle discrimination from her family members although she admits that they have accepted her status and provide emotional support. Her family has become a significant stressor and push factor resulting in a close bond with her current boyfriend.

Four months prior to the interview, with the help of a counselor, she disclosed her status to her current boyfriend. Although he tested HIV negative, he has accepted her positive diagnosis and is determined to continue their relationship. The two are a sero-discordant couple and they engage in inconsistent condom use. While Leila was relieved that she no longer had to carry the burden of the secret, at the time of the interview she was managing a new dilemma. Leila reported that she was experiencing intense pressure from her partner to have children. She was fearful that her boyfriend would leave her if she was unable to bear children.

Mary was a 21-year-old female who lived at a residential institution for 19 years prior to which she lived at one of the General Hospitals. Mary reported that a doctor disclosed her status to her when she was 7 years old. At the time of the interview, she was in transition from institutional care to independent living and predicted that she would be living on her own within a year.

Mary experienced many acts of discrimination, neglect and abuse owing to her HIV status throughout her life; this included being scorned by medical practitioners as a child, to being ridiculed and bullied in late childhood/early adolescence. Mary reported that at age 19, she refused to engage in a sexual relationship with her then boyfriend because she did not want to disclose her status. Angered by her refusal to have a sexual relationship, she reported that she was gang-raped by her boyfriend and four of his friends. At the time of the interview, Mary had recently disclosed the incident to three trusted adults, one of whom was her counsellor. I was the fourth person to whom she disclosed the rape which she kept secret for two years. When asked why she did not report the rape, she averred that reporting the rape would entail her revealing her status, and if her status were known she would be victimized further. Additionally, she forwarded that she was legally an adult, and she was certain that the police would assume that she was responsible for the rape.



I am 23 years old. I was born with HIV and have lived with it for 23 years now. I am living a normal life. I want you to hear what we have to say.

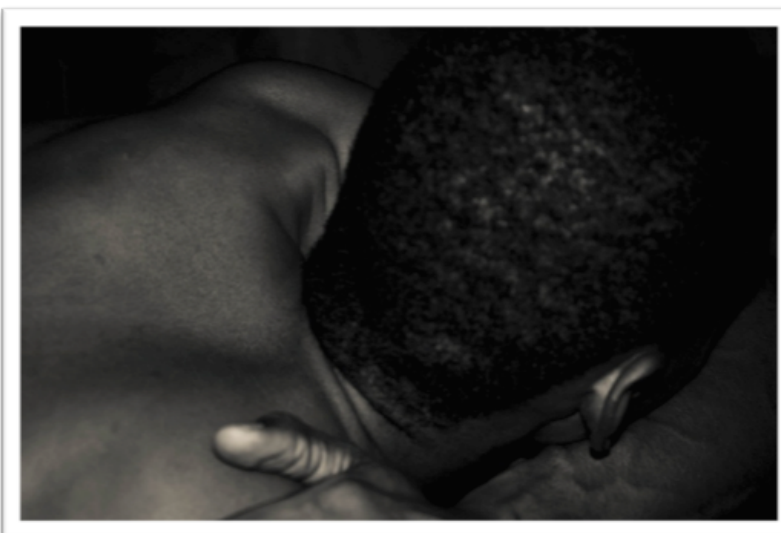
Figure 6: Self -Portrait by Mary

At the time of the interview, Mary was involved in an intimate relationship for the past year and recently disclosed her status to her current partner. He accepted her diagnosis and committed to maintaining their relationship. Mary revealed

that she was very fearful of his family learning of her status and the possibility that they would not accept their relationship.

Edward was a 20-year-old male who was perinatally infected. He recalled that a primary school teacher and staff at the institution in which he grew up disclosed his status to him at age six. At the time of the interview, Edward was transitioning to independent living. Edward reported that throughout his childhood he wondered about his birth parents and that this was a source of much anxiety. As a young adult, he learned that his mother was deceased and has gained snippets of information about her life. Edward has recently connected with his father and is exploring the possibility of living with him.

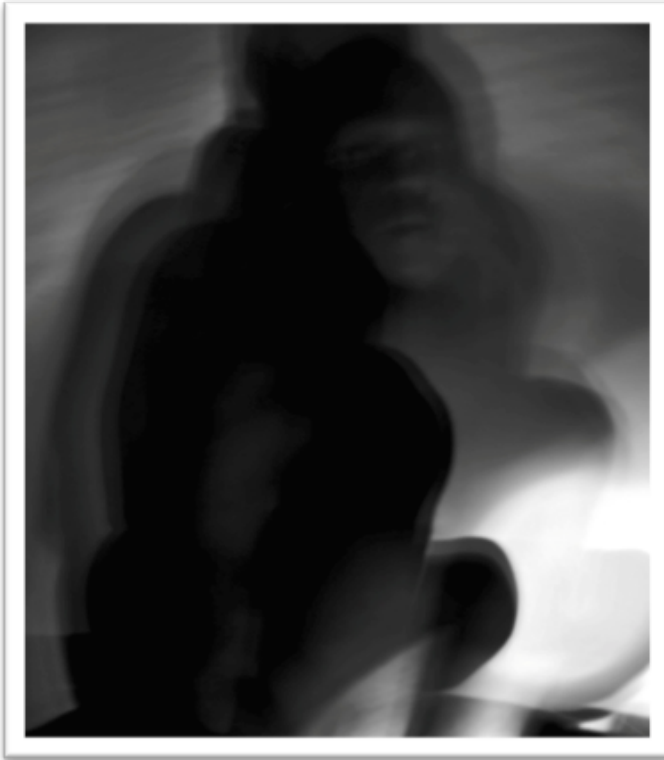
Edward was very open about his status. He has granted interviews to newspapers since he was in his mid-teens and participated in a documentary in which he publicly disclosed his status. Although he appeared more confident about his status than the other five interviewees, he struggles with issues around disclosure. At the time of the interview, Edward had recently acceded to a request by his school to refrain from speaking openly about his HIV diagnosis. Additionally, Edward also admitted that he was 'nervous' about his girlfriend's family learning about his status.



I am twenty-three years of age and I am happy with my life. I would like people to hear the truth about HIV. People should not look at us any different from normal people. People should not isolate people living with the virus. We are normal people just like everyone else. People should appreciate our experience and the struggle that comes with it. Respect and love.

Figure 7: Self Portrait by Edward

John was a 21-year-old male who contracted HIV a year prior through sexual contact. John also identified as a homosexual male and believed that his sexual orientation in addition to his HIV status made him “an outcast among outcasts”. He was outspoken, articulate and was not tentative about attending the interview.



I am 22 years old and I have been living with the virus for a year now. I remember hearing the nurse call me into a private room and breaking the news to me. I was in disbelief. I couldn't understand how, with all the knowledge I had about the virus through the media, workshops on HIV/AIDS, I still allowed myself to get infected. It really only takes one time for you to become infected, so the one moment where you think a condom doesn't make a difference is the one time you could get infected. I hope this exhibition dispels any shadows or myths about HIV and people living with the virus.

Figure 8: Self Portrait by John

Prior to learning about his status, he was a first-year university student. However, since learning of his status he decided to discontinue his schooling. John identified two contributing factors to his decision to take ‘an indefinite leave of absence from school’: “trying to figure out what to do now that I have HIV” and the death of his mother which occurred three months after his diagnosis. Although his mother's death was due to natural causes, John indicated that many of his family members were of the opinion that his diagnosis and sexual orientation contributed to hastening her death. He intimated that there are days that he knows that this is not true, however, on other days he felt depressed about his status and accepts that “maybe I killed my mother.”

Prior to his HIV infection, John was heavily involved in HIV education and prevention. As a member of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered (LGBT) community, John often attended training programmes and workshops. There were striking sentiments throughout John's interview that expressed self-loathing and disgust that with all his awareness and knowledge about HIV, he nevertheless contracted the virus. This interviewee struggles with disclosure revolving around the stigma and discrimination associated with homophobia as much as with HIV.

Profiles of Young Researchers

Nine youth researchers recruited through the second cycle of the study also participated as youth collaborators. Demographic data of this cohort of researchers are detailed in the table below:

Alias	Sex	Age	School/Work Status	Religion
B	M	19	A Level student	Christian of no denomination ¹
F	F	19	Form 6 (graduate)	Christian
T	F	17	Form 5 (graduate)	Catholic
M	M	18	A Level student	Catholic
B2	M	19	Form 6 (graduate)	Deist/ Spiritualist
J	F	18	A Level student	Moravian
F	F	18	A Level student	Anglican
L	F	19	Form 6 (graduate)	Seven-day Adventist
I	F	20	Form 6 (graduate)/ Employed	Pentecostal
J	F	20	Form 6 (graduate)/ Employed	Pentecostal

Findings

At first glance, the young persons in these transcripts just appeared afraid of disclosing their status and this dread appeared to be motivated by fear of being stigmatized and discriminated against by their peers, family members and any other random person with whom they may have contact. Upon closer analysis, it was clear that there were many dynamics involved in disclosure and several layers of disclosure factors contributing to how young people think and feel about talking about their status. What stands out the most is that these young people feel invisible, as though they do not matter because people and institutions that they have come into contact with have told them so, showed them so, screamed at them that they are not important. So, they want to hide more to protect themselves. (Young Researcher-age19)



No matter how far I travel I can't run away from HIV

Perceptions of Powerlessness and Agency

Throughout the interviews, YPLWH articulated a lack of agency to contribute to major decision-making about key aspects related to their wellbeing. In addition to being physically powerless against the virus which infected their bodies, the adults in their circles of care were able to exert measures of power and control over their lives. Participants reported a sense of being underestimated and perceived as helpless, as though their illness equated to their lack of ability to perform tasks. Discussing perceptions about his ability one participant conveyed,

I: What work were you doing?

M: Wholesale goods. Real hard work and people doubting and always talking to me like 'That work too hard for you and this and that.' Used to do construction and all. I don't like how, like alright; we know I'm sick yeah – that doesn't say I can't do nothing. Everybody does act like "he not able" and this and that. I could do anything! (Matters, age 19)

Another participant discussed agency as she referred to her experience of being labeled a "teenage pregnancy",

She [Cindy's mother] take me to the Clinic, and they send us to [names hospital] because they say it was a teenage pregnancy. When we went to Clinic they say they have to do tests. My mother had to sign the forms. But is my body. But she have to sign the forms because I underage. I have no say in anything.

I: Did that really bother you?

Yes. Every time we go to a doctor or nurse, I hearing 'she underage', 'she underage', 'she underage'. Like I is not somebody, like I don't have this body. Like it belong to my mother.

(Cindy, age 15)

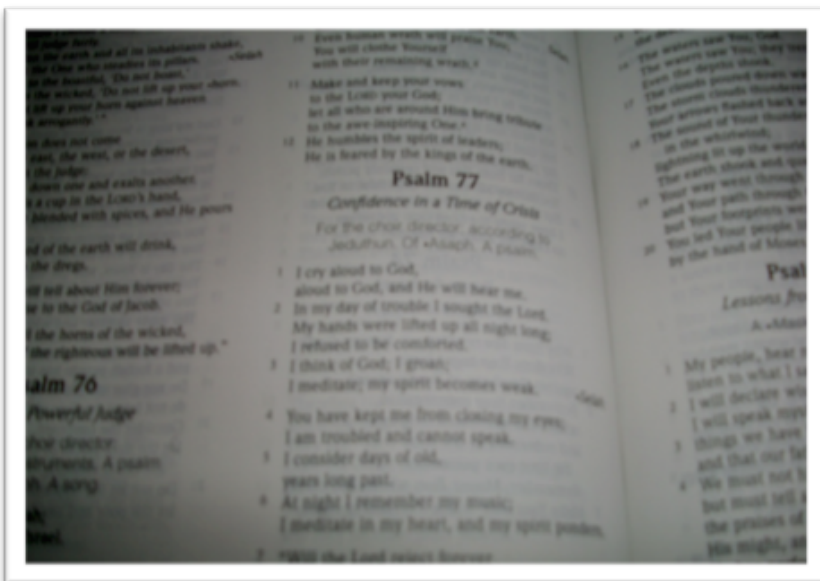
Both Cindy and Leila recalled that practitioners gave their mothers a privileged position during their initial diagnosis. Cindy was told of her status at the same time as her mother while Leila's mother was the first to learn of her daughter's status approximately three weeks before it was disclosed to Leila.

Rationalizing and Making Sense of HIV

In-dentity, Struggles and Society was a thematic area identified by the photovoice researchers developed to categorize photographs that addressed issues around personhood and sense of self. The term “In-dentity” was used to connote the extent to which these young people felt alone and silenced in their skin. The photovoice researchers perceived that while “normal” young people were enjoying life, partying and living in freedom and spontaneity, their existence was muted because they were negotiating HIV in the midst of building their sense of self. Whether it entailed figuring out being gay and HIV positive, or being in love and HIV positive, the researchers revealed that they feel consumed by anxiety and worry on a daily basis.

How one became infected and making sense of it emerged as an integral part of how the photovoice researchers constructed their identity as HIV positive people. Life experience taught these researchers that mode of transmission was inherently connected to stigma. Either the stigma of being born with HIV and by extension have an HIV positive mother and/or father or the stigma of being perceived as sexually promiscuous or the stigma of identifying as homosexual or gay and therefore sexually promiscuous. The photovoice researchers felt as though they had to defend themselves against one social stigma or another.

The words crisis, fear and frustration are used frequently by researchers when describing their feelings about living with HIV. The fear of being seen as an HIV positive person was pronounced and as discussed previously, this was a major motivator of secrecy as well as non-adherence. One participant summed up his “crisis” as “longing for acceptance and trying to reason with struggles”.



*This is my everyday
reading from the Bible.*

*Everyday with HIV is a
time of Crisis.*

Rationalizing one's status was a significant and ongoing process for these young people; it was a crucial, emotional and cognitive means of psychosocial management of one's HIV status. The young people generally expressed that they felt unfairly punished by contracting HIV because they did not deserve to have it. Punishment was perceived in the form of burdensome medication regimes, physical illness, anxiety and stress as well as fear about anticipated stigma. Among the perinatally infected young persons, the sentiment that being HIV positive was not a consequence of their actions/sexual behaviours was pronounced. Meanwhile, the YPLWH who contracted HIV through sexual behaviours continually repeated that they were "good persons", reinforcing their beliefs that a HIV diagnosis was not something that they deserved.

The participants conveyed their sense that HIV meant that they would "always be different". Perceptions of stigma, enacted and felt, also impacted personal meanings of HIV for the YPLWH. The sentiment that nothing could be done about discrimination and stigma was also very pronounced. One participant however discussed using stigma as a source of strength,

I don't see anything really. The way people think...that's life. People just think different; some people. Haters will always talk talk. People who jealous you, who always talking bad about you; wish they was you. I glad for them. If it wasn't for them I wouldn't be who I am. (Edward, age 20)

Undoubtedly, an HIV diagnosis invoked intense feelings and the process of acceptance entailed a process of rationalization. The three perinatally infected participants indicated their feeling that it would be easier to understand their infection if they had contracted HIV through sexual relations. They expressed that if they contracted HIV through sexual intercourse then it would be easier to rationalize their infection since it would be easier to assign blame. The three participants infected via sexual transmission nevertheless also indicated being unable to assign blame. They indicated that it would be easier to understand if they were “awful persons”. One participant asserted,

It have other people whose be doing all kind of stupidity and you know, how come they not in this situation, how come poor Leila in this situation.
(Leila, age 22)

Supportive relationships with health care practitioners were also flagged as important to making sense of HIV infections. While stigmatizing encounters with health practitioners were reported, there were also reports of overwhelmingly positive and nurturing relations and interactions. These practitioners have been instrumental to contributing to their meaning-making about HIV/AIDS. One young person reported of a nurse supporting her through disclosing her status to an intimate partner, while two of the YPLWH who grew up in institutionalized care facilities reported having close supportive relationships with caregivers. These practitioners helped the YPLWH to begin building their personal narratives of how they would live with HIV. All of the YPLWH give examples of this sentiment and these experiences are reflected on by one young person, who pondering his relationship with a social worker mused,

I have died many times since I contracted HIV. Each time (names practitioner), reached into the grave and pulled me out before the dirt covered me. Oh gosh, that seems so melodramatic, but it is so true. I can't think of another way to really tell you how he has saved me. (John, age 21)



Real life. No fantasy. And all fear and frustration...The first time I saw this place I was afraid to go inside. I was thinking if someone would see me or who I would see. Then there is the frustration of being there for so long. I go once a month and the wait is between one or two hours if you want to see the doctor. It is most frustrating. Scared. Torn. Between two worlds. Reality and beyond. Save myself from the death in the air.

Medication

Although the researchers understood that HIV was a chronic illness, sentiments of fatality were often expressed. Medication adherence was a complex issue for these young people because it was inextricably tied to the psychosocial aspects of living with HIV. The photograph below illustrates the Medical Research Foundation, a prominent building in Trinidad located in Port-of-Spain and the central medical facility for treatment of HIV in the country. The narrative attached reveals fear of indirect disclosure, the emotional impact of accessing care and treatment and the feeling of existing between two worlds – “reality” of accessing treatment and “beyond”, that is the “death that is in the air”.

The youth collaborators (both HIV negative and HIV positive participants) held clear ideas of what a young person should be and these ideas were designated as carefree and not subject to rigidity. HIV was perceived to irrevocably remove youth as a carefree experience from the reach of YPLWH. Medication became symbolic of and synonymous with deprivation of youth.

Medication and the requirement of adherence were perceived to “interfere” and set YPLWH apart from other young persons. For Matters, it was evident that the pressure of medication extends beyond his inability to consume alcohol and was perceived as punishment or blame for being HIV positive;

... I'm young and strong and I like to knock about. If I'm taking medication and I'm feeling sick or drowsy, I can't really go anywhere; if I go anywhere I wouldn't feel good. Then too, when I go out I like to drink – can't drink and take medication. That's a next problem – most of the partners I lime with they drink, so....This whole medication....I wouldn't use the word, but it's messed up. (Matters, age 19)

There is also a sense of being overwhelmed by having to consistently and indefinitely take medication;

You have to take medication for the rest of your life, till you reach a certain age and you can't take no more. Then it goes? I don't understand. My life is a mess, that's why I taking this ...for me. I don't mind taking the two in the morning and the night, but it always have a million in between. (Matters, age 19)

The association of medication with distress as opposed to wellness is expressed clearly in the interview data. Medication is symbolic of young people's lack of control in their lives.

Stigma and discrimination

The young researchers discerned three levels of stigma apparent in the transcribed data they analyzed. These included Intrapersonal Stigma, Legislative

Stigma and Relationship Stigma – the researchers submitted definitions for the terms. Intrapersonal Stigma was described as,

...the battle with oneself, as they [HIV positive interviewees] struggled with the reality that they are living with HIV/AIDS. This type of stigma was motivated by perceptions and expectations of non-acceptance, stigma and discrimination, and resulted in young persons denying themselves of the opportunity of forming new relationships and achieving goals. They also highlighted evidence where the young persons interviewed were denied opportunities for education, professional advancement, relationships and upward mobility.

(Young Researcher, Trinidad group, age 20)

Relationship Stigma referred to,

discrimination on a relationship basis whether intimate, professional, casual or ethical. The young researchers found this particularly disturbing, and cited the examples of overt and covert forms of discrimination meted out by parents, institutions and friends (Young Researcher, Trinidad group, age 19)

Legislative Stigma is defined as “stigma which is caused by a societal system, or institution” (Young Researcher, Trinidad group, age 20). Evidence was found in instances in the data where young persons were denied education and HIV testing and treatment-related service (without parental accompaniment).

This stigma was associated in terms of the view that the virus is a punishment that prevents individuals from being like everybody else. This form of alienation manifests itself majorly in acts of scorn and discrimination and changes an HIV positive person's views on persons towards an automatic lack of acceptance. (Young Researcher, Trinidad group, age 19)

Stigma and discrimination were experienced in public spaces as health care clinics, within the administrative structures of schools as well as within their families. One young researcher offered in his written findings that,

The YPLWH also felt isolated due to societal prejudice or discrimination that was very real [enacted stigma]. However, when discrimination and stigma was experienced within their families, the young persons were most devastated. In such an uncertain social environment, support systems for YPLWH were crucial to their physical and emotional wellbeing. (Young Researcher, Trinidad group, age 21)

Secrecy, self-protection, stigma

Secrecy appeared to have three distinct motivations: fear of disclosure, fear of stigma and a generalized lack of trust. One of the young researchers forwarded that,

The YPLWH often projected their feelings onto the actions of other persons. There were a few examples in the transcripts where participants imagined the perception of others and responded to it as though it was enacted stigma. (Young Researcher, Tobago group, age 18)

The following excerpt from the transcript data was highlighted by the aforementioned young researcher from Tobago,

I: You have brought up your skin a number of times, when people see your skin, what you think they think?

M: They think "That skin stink!" Keep it here (points to his head) don't tell me anything, cause I will trip. Yeah, that's [my] guilty conscience. You just feel like they know. That's what does send me mad too – I just keep thinking somebody know. (Matters, age 21)

There were repeated instances where participants reported feeling exposed, as though everyone knew about their status. Recounting the first of her three HIV testing experiences, Cindy forwarded,

They did the first test and they tell me that they had to do another test to confirm it. I was there with plenty other people. But mine come back first, it come back quick. The person sitting next to me went "oh gooouuud". I felt scared. They tell me to wait for them to confirm. But I was sitting there and feeling like they all was seeing right through me. All of them. The

nurses, the other people there. They was seeing right straight through me. I just get up and leave. (Cindy, age 15)

Trust was an important value for these young persons and it was tightly interwoven with their feelings about secrecy. Cindy articulated that becoming HIV positive taught her not to trust, "I get burn already so I keep clear of people. You can't trust them at all". Concealment of one's HIV status is therefore of paramount importance for these young persons and much effort was expended to maintain secrecy.

Secrecy is a stressful, often self-imposed act without any justification or evidence indicating its necessity. Decision-making around secrecy were fueled more by felt stigma rather than enacted stigma.

The young people expressed varying degrees of insistence on secrecy about their status. There was a strong sentiment (existing for all but one participant) to maintain secrecy indefinitely, thereby avoiding potential risk associated with disclosure. A strong motive for secrecy was self-protection. These young people perceived their social and cultural space as rife with the risk of potential life-threatening responses to public disclosure of their status; their physical and emotional wellbeing were considered to be in jeopardy. There was a distinct distrust for strangers but also friends and family members. The interviewees often choose to avoid associating with other persons living with HIV as well. They revealed that the possibility and potential for intimate partner relationships evoked the most intense responses.

The young researchers identified isolation as a powerful characteristic among the HIV positive youth. One of the young researchers described how isolation, secrecy and disclosure are entangled for the HIV positive youth,

Isolation was intricately linked to secrecy because the youth in the study often kept the secret by themselves and as keeping secrets became more burdensome they became more isolated and as they became

more isolated they severed relationships for fear of unintentional disclosure. (Young Researcher, Trinidad group, age 19)

Unintentional disclosure referred to situations where persons may accidentally stumble upon someone's status or witness an incident that raised suspicions that a person was HIV positive, as walking in on an HIV positive person taking medication, or spotting someone near the Clinic. "There was also a kind of loneliness about going through this all by oneself without having the support of others" (Young Researcher, Tobago group, age 17). Avoiding knowingly or unknowingly disclosing one's status necessitated a measure of caution in one's interactions in social spaces including at home among family members. This type of guardedness was found to place a strain on family relationships.

Although the interviewees reported that secrecy was one of the best ways to safeguard themselves from the perils of disclosure, they also reported instances where disclosure yielded benefits. The three benefits indicated were: that disclosure educated others about their needs, could function to strengthen relationships and could be a therapeutic experience. One YPLWH expressed that disclosure was inevitable "if you planned to have a meaningful life with people you love in it" (Edward, age 20) citing that if "you let people in your life and trust them, they will figure things out". The interviewees unanimously conveyed that "disclosure was the right thing to do" (John, age 21) but it was also the most difficult endeavour with which positive people are faced. Furthermore, it was found that interviewees were able to elucidate rights and responsibilities that were paired with disclosure.

Lack of protection for young people

The interview data also evidenced the lack of protection afforded to youth. Cindy contracted HIV at age 15 from a 20-year old man who was also responsible for her pregnancy. Per her report, there was no action taken against this man. Another young woman was gang raped and again, legal action was not sought. One young researcher was adamant in her argument that

These incidents were clear demonstrations of the society's failure to protect young persons from further violations occurring by pursuing these perpetrators. YPLWH had a right to a decent living situation. They also have the right to education and employment and the right to life. (Young Researcher, Tobago group, age 17)

Framing and reframing HIV: dualities of living and dying

Learning to accept one's status is a process and young people go through this process simultaneously with other processes related to their growth and development. The interview data evidenced young people who were undergoing this process simultaneously with a process of accepting there is no answer to "Why am I not normal?" Participants conveyed struggling with suicidal thoughts. Two participants indicated their sentiments that death would be the ideal form of disclosure and that until death their secret would be theirs alone to carry. These revelations about disclosure reinforced the lack of safety and intense vulnerability with which these young people contended.

Regardless of the stressors and challenges of living with HIV these young people nevertheless possess strengths and strategies for "staying focused" and having a positive outlook on life. There is a commitment that each has to finding and holding on to happiness. It appears contradictory that expressions of hopelessness and fatalistic notions of living with the virus could be expressed with such fervour yet accompany such profound admissions of hope and strength. Matters resolved,

My mind just strong yes. That's why I told my grandmother the other day: I said "If, well, other people who went through what I went through might not be alive up to today". So it's just me, I just....something's wrong with me. I just strong. Cause so much I went through in the past, so much, that I reaching to the end of the road...like that's it and just bounce back – everything normal again ... prayers is onna the main things. I just trying to stay focused. Try not to think negative. Always think positive and..... Always have the

negative thoughts must come in my mind but...try to blank it off.
(Matters, 21)

Mary surmised that becoming comfortable with her status was essential for living with the virus,

Cause you have to be happy in life. You can't be sulky and study about the virus all the time, cause if you study about the virus it could make you get sick and you could end up dead. (Mary, 22)

Building a Model for Engaging Youth in Social Action

The silenced are not just incidental to the curiosity of the researcher but are the masters of inquiry into the underlying causes of the events in their world. In this context research becomes a means of moving them beyond silence into a quest to proclaim the world. Friere (1982, 30-31)

One of the defining characteristics of action research is that the research journey is as revealing as its outcome(s). The pluralistic nature of this research design implies that there is no single research journey. Instead, each participant's journey, to include their experiences, dilemmas and challenges encountered in the PAR process, is a unique data set. Within the participants' journey there were several overlapping processes of data generation, self-discovery and discoveries of each other as the youth collaborators from which to draw knowledge. In Friere's words, these youth collaborators started upon "a quest to proclaim the world", producing an exhibition, a documentary, inviting audiences into their silences but also daring to move beyond their silences.

The novelty of this study emerges from its capacity to draw together two groups of young people, HIV negative and HIV positive, into a discussion with each other using a qualitative investigation. The two groups never met yet they engaged in an iterative process of reflecting, questioning, answering and challenging each other's perspectives as they adopted the activist researcher stance differently, yet with a common purpose. Within this frame that privileges

subjectivity and evidence equally, the research participants were able to derive personal yet substantive understandings of HIV. During the ensuing dialogue the young people clarified their ideas, their fears and hopes against each other's.

At the start of the research process, the young researchers averred that they were either very neutral about HIV without any particularly strong opinions or thoughts of YPLWH as promiscuous, careless people. By the close of the study, there was an absence of neutrality; one participant remarked that he felt as though they had all "become part of the extended support system for all YPLWH". This sentiment was quickly embraced as group members agreed that it best summed up their feeling about participation in the data analysis. These participants reflected that they could no longer be party to ignorant conversations "at least not with good conscience", one researcher quickly added.

The utility of the research process to teach young people how to understand HIV more deeply emerged as the most meaningful part of this experience. Reflecting on the entire research experience, one young researcher commented at the closure group discussion that, "It taught us more than the usual 'here's how not to get it, now move on and remember don't get it' ". The impact of these research processes was tied to its ability to contribute to the personal development of these young people. In a post-research focus group discussion, participants forwarded that the study was facilitative of their personal development because the research process and the researcher:

- treated young persons with respect
- provided information
- facilitated communication
- conferred responsibility on the young researchers; and
- invested power in young persons.

One young researcher forwarded that she was “forever changed” by the experience as she developed a keener sensibility to taken-for-granted ideas,

It changed the way I thought about common things. I break things down more now. I think about things more. Like I was listening to the radio with my sister one morning, it was like a youth programme right. And the radio person was asking will you let your friend breastfeed your baby. And all these girls were calling in and giving their opinions and nobody, not even the announcer talked about HIV. And they were saying too that only worthless mothers don't breastfeed and again the announcer did not say anything. What about HIV positive mothers. [laughs] I think this research taught me that people who have opinions that are widely listened to, don't really know anything [Young Researcher, Trinidad group, 21)

Youth engagement is the key to achieving an HIV free generation. The results of this study urge a move beyond piecemeal approaches to HIV research and programming which target youth. It calls for greater involvement of youth in research that is non-tokenistic, adult-guided but youth-centered. The knowledge that this study has produced supports a move beyond prevention research and programming for HIV negative youth and a care, treatment and containment agenda for HIV positive youth. This study's research process was able to produce novel understandings about HIV disclosure and young people by creating a polyvocal youth dialogue that implicated critical self-inquiry. In the Caribbean context, young people are often the subject of political and social campaigns as well as the recipients of private and public sector programmatic efforts. Yet, young people continue to be marginalized and largely silent in the sphere of participation and decision-making in areas of vulnerability and risk. In no area is this more pronounced than in relation to the HIV epidemic. There is a pervasive sense that if we continue to throw money at the epidemic, risk behaviours will magically change. This research project works to challenge these discursive mythologies.

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¹ A term coined by psychologist Stanley Hall to denote adolescence as a developmental period of chaos and tumult

² Photovoice is research strategy informed by a partnership between research participants and a principal researcher in data collection and analysis. Among the core theoretical underpinnings of this method are education for critical consciousness, feminist theory, and a grassroots approach to documentary photography (Wang 1999). According to Palibroda, Kreig and Havelock (2009), photovoice has three main goals, (1) to enable people to record and reflect their strengths and concerns (2) to promote critical dialogue and knowledge about personal and community issues through group discussions of photographs; and (3) to disseminate findings to stakeholder groups/ policy makers. A public exhibition/dissemination of findings takes the form of a public exhibition of photographs taken by participants (Photo) with short vignettes written by the photographers describing their pictures (Voice).



Legitimizing Virtual Constituencies: How CSOs are Using Digital Technologies to Enlarge the Space for Citizen Participation in Women and Gender Issues in the Caribbean

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Abstract

Online social movements have allowed for a deepening of democracy by allowing individuals to more easily link with causes and issues that are important to them. Especially for the women's rights movement, social platforms have allowed the 'personal' – through the sharing of stories - to significantly impact the way lay-persons understand the political. This is a critical element in achieving gender justice, since it directly impacts entrenched attitudes and beliefs which are the driving forces of discrimination against women.

However, the 'gatekeepers' of democratic decision making processes - governments and multilateral mechanisms - still have the power to decide who participates and how. The gatekeepers use the argument of 'legitimacy' as a way to suppress participation of online social movements/organisations. Legitimacy in this sense is often defined in legal terms (articles of registration, financial and governance structures), but also in terms of 'constituencies'. It may be argued that the ways in which people come to join online social movements - through hashtagging, signing online petitions, participating in cause-related campaigns - make it difficult to identify 'real' constituencies. There are no annual general meetings, no membership fees, no voting in of the board, none of the traditional legitimacy and transparency requirements.

This paper will explore the ways in which online movements are bypassing the gatekeepers and are 'claiming spaces': creating the rules and expanding the definition of legitimacy. It will seek to identify the methodologies and tools used by women and gender-focused CSOs in the Caribbean to legitimize their virtual constituencies and examine their success in impacting policy.

Keywords: civil society organisations, digital technologies, gender, social mobilisation, Caribbean

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Introduction

A vibrant and active civil society is a key feature of good governance, ensuring that national policies, development plans and resources of a country are managed in such a way that the lives and well-being of all citizens are prioritized. Civil society is most commonly conflated with its organised forms - NGOs, trade unions, community groups. However, such actors as individual activists, including online activists, artists and writers and human rights defenders, when they act in the public sphere to advance or defend a viewpoint that others may share, are part of civil society too (Civicus 2013).

The explosion in communications technology and social networking platforms has expanded the reach of civil society organisations and activists. Traditionally, civil society actors relied on the strength of thought leaders and community builders to meet with and interact with persons on the ground to win support for a cause. Today, anyone with access to a computer can establish an identity and invite people to join their cause with the click of a 'follow' button. This democratization has led to an increased sense of personal activism, with persons easily able to link to a cause or issue that is important to them. Followers engage as civil society actors themselves when they 'like' a post, sign a petition, retweet a post, use a hashtag or post their personal opinions via a social media platform. Social media has made it far easier to reach a wider range of like-minded individuals over a larger geographic area, internationalizing the work of many CSOs and facilitating the formation of cross-border coalitions and support networks.

These virtual constituencies have become a key resource for CSOs. According to the 2016 Global NGO Online Technology Report, 63% of all donors prefer to give online with 72% of millennials saying that they are most often inspired to give by social media. The reach of the various communication technologies and social media platforms has facilitated networking and organising for action on a tremendous scale as has been seen with the Occupy Movements and Black Lives Matter phenomena.

But in the absence of high visibility events like protests, how are online constituencies being used to further the issues that CSOs seek to address on a longer term basis? How are CSOs able to prove that their online followers agree with their objectives or policy positions? Does a simple 'like' of a Facebook page constitute agreement? Can an action initiated by community group page claim legitimacy because it has 500 followers? How do we even know if users are real identities? And how do we prove that virtual constituencies are indeed legitimate.

Technology, social mobilization and civil society

Communication technologies have long served to advance civil society objectives. From the expansion in access to press and radio to the introduction of the internet, email and SMS (short messaging systems), communications technologies have made it possible for civil society actors to share information and ideas with their members and supporters as well as facilitate easier mobilisation and coordination of actions such as protests, demonstrations and other tactics for advancing their cause.

However, the second generation of web technology, referred to as Web 2.0, has created a significant change in the nature and scope of civil society organising. Unlike first generation web technologies like email listservs and websites that have enabled civil society activists to share their messages with supporters, Web 2.0 platforms enable individuals to not just be the receivers of information but become co-creators of user-generated content. Social media applications such as blogs, Facebook and Twitter enable individuals to link with others in networked spaces - exchanging ideas, engaging in critical debate and participating in decision-making (Castells 2008).

This not only changes the ways in which individuals participate in movements or causes, but also has implications for the very structure of civil society organising. While more traditionally-structured formal organisations may benefit from this technology by reducing costs for mobilisation and promoting greater sense of

collective identity, it also enables decentralized and non-hierarchical forms of activism to flourish and makes it easier for movement-entrepreneur-led activism to come to the fore (Garrett 2006). Movements such as Black Lives Matter in the USA and the Life In Leggings in Barbados show how such movements birthed from social media platforms have been able to use networked, decentralised and collaborative structures to expand their influence in the public sphere and be adopted by organisers in other states and countries. What we are seeing in this new era of activism is "a shift from the institutional political system to informal and formal associations of interests and values as the source of collective action and socio-political influence" (Castells 2008, 84).

Still, many scholars question whether web technologies are in fact expanding democratic participation and having significant or sustained impacts on the policy space. While access to information and participation in co-creating content enlarges the potential for amplifying citizen voice, access to internet may not be widely available to persons from poorer communities. In addition, individuals who most often engage in online activist spaces are usually the same ones who are also involved in activism offline, thereby reinforcing existing patterns of political participation in society (Van Laer and Van Aelst 2009, 234).

Questions have also been raised about whether the use of these technologies are having any real transformative impact on the scope and scale of CSO organising. While Web 2.0 technologies have created opportunities to have closer, more direct communication with supporters, civil society organisations have not substantially changed their mobilising strategies. Their 'tactical repertoire' or toolkit of actions (protests, demonstrations, petitions and disruption) continues to be the same, though the internet has provided opportunities to innovate and expand the ways in which these actions are executed. (Garrett 2006, Van Laer and Van Aelst 2009). And although communities of interest can spring up overnight on social media platforms, often after the action they supported is over, individuals often choose to move on and don't feel a need to

get permanently engaged. (Earl and Schussman 2003, cited in Van Laer and Van Aelst 2009).

What has changed in the digital era is that there is less distinction in term of political and non-political social engagement, as online communities dedicated to leisure, professional or social activities also occasionally turn their attention to political issues and protest activities (Polletta et al. 2013). This means that even in the face of apparently ever-increasing public disengagement from formal political institutions and processes, individuals and particularly younger people are incorporating activism as part of their social profile. (cf. Dalton 2008 cited in Van Laer and Van Aelst 2009).

Even if the tactical repertoires of activist organisations have not strategically changed, innovations made possible by the internet (memes, hashtags) are very effective in leveling the power balance between corporations, politicians and the public by increasing accountability. And while the many may be drawn towards 'low threshold' actions such as signing online petitions, it has been found that individuals participating in 'high threshold' (riskier) political actions such as illegal demonstrations have been previously engaged in 'low threshold' actions (Verhulst and Van Laer 2008 cited in Van Laer and Van Aelst 2009). The key to harnessing the support base and maintaining strong ties in social movements lies in 'sustained interactions' which in fact makes new web technologies a valuable resource for civil society actors and organisations, as it provides the largely passive support base a low-intensity forum for issue-based communication, potentially strengthening their identification with the movement (Diani 2000 cited in Garrett 2006) and allowing them to form political opinions through conversation. (Shirky 2011, 37)

Despite the fact that new technologies make possible increased information and knowledge of political issues among supporters, there is no guarantee that this increased online activity correlates to a movement's ability to influence change in official politics (Van Dijk 2006 cited in Groshek 2010). Such change is

also influenced by the conditions in the political environment including "the relative accessibility of the political system, the stable or fragmented alignments among elites, the presences of elite allies, and the state's capacity and propensity for repression." (McAdam 1996 as cited in Garrett 2006).

Constituencies as the basis for defining legitimacy of CSOs

Legitimacy implies acceptance. For any type of civil society actor – NGOs, community-based organisations, online activists - there must be some general recognition by others that the CSO has the authority to speak on behalf of, and promote, the interests of a specific group of people. This recognition is most directly indicated by an organisation's membership, to whom the board or other governing mechanism is accountable. In the absence of a membership, legitimacy may also come from recognition of the CSO's competence and expertise in the field and evidence of an established relationship with the constituency the CSO purports to represent.

But very often we think of legitimacy in legal terms. Is the organisation legally registered under a government body? Does it have a governance structure? Are there established procedures for accounting and reporting?

Governance and transparency are indeed important for ensuring that organisations are accountable to, and serve the interests of, their members and constituents. However, one of the most important reasons CSOs move to become legally registered is so that they can access funding from donors and government agencies and be invited to participate in policy-making processes such as consultations, committees or state sanctioned civil society advisory boards.

Sometimes CSOs spend a great deal of their energies making themselves 'legitimate' in the eyes of donors and governments at the expense of focusing on the legitimacy derived from constituencies. They set their agenda based on

the priorities and programmes established by donor NGOs, foundations and multilateral agencies, and spend a great deal of their resources building their professional skills in organisational development so that they can be effective 'partners'. This has the effect of actually weakening civil society's 'oppositional consciousness' as organisations get bogged down with bureaucratic details instead of harnessing local energies for change (Barnes 2009).

But legal requirements can also be used as a way to exclude civil society voices and action. In many parts of the world, governments have instituted various laws and regulations that are designed to dismantle CSOs and create hostile environments for civil society. The State of Civil Society Report (CIVICUS 2016) indicates that in 2015, CSOs in 109 countries have come under serious attack. Governments are revoking registrations for organisations, making certain sources of foreign aid illegal, invoking anti-terrorism laws, and threatening activists with imprisonment. The report also notes in particular, that there have been concerted efforts to intimidate and exclude organisations and activists dealing with rights of indigenous communities and LGBTI rights.

With international funding sources drying up in recent years, it has forced CSOs to rethink the ways in which they define their sustainability and more and more CSOs are returning to constituencies as the basis of their legitimacy. There is a growing focus on movement building and networks as strategies to impact social change versus the project modality. In a way, we are seeing a move back to engaging constituencies and prioritizing the issues they identify as important, instead of skewing the organisation's strategies to fit in line with the objectives of external funding agencies.

Civil society as the site of innovation

Often it is civil society that lights a path and creates new ways of looking at and addressing social problems. It is this freedom from institutional norms that gives civil society the space to challenge the dominant cultural and political landscape and create new modes of engagement.

The rise of social media as the site for political action is one of these innovations. Civil society has been able to use social media as a way of enlarging the space for citizen action by creating spaces and opportunities for a wider range of persons, including more marginalized voices, to highlight the issues they deem important and participate in creating change. In fact, many civil society actors and organisations that originated online have been able to win enough support from their virtual constituencies to actually influence major policy changes and/or public interest outcomes that serve to shift public discourse and lead to changes in institutional practices.

So while citizen participation carries its own self-originated legitimacy (Marshall 2002), and legitimacy of CSOs is further strengthened by enlarging the constituency, then legitimizing virtual constituencies consists of strategies aimed at identifying, targeting and creating opportunities for participation of constituencies in the virtual space.

How virtual constituencies are enlarging the space for civil society engagement

A constituency is the group of persons an organisation (or actor) uses as its point of reference. They are the ones whose interests the CSO purports to represent or speak on behalf of. These constituencies may be identified through official membership of an organisation or grouping, where such members are involved in the governance of the entity, or by representation as per a board. Still, many recognized organisations, including those that have originated online, have neither membership nor representation but are "legitimised by the validity of their ideas, by the values they promote, and by the issues they care about" (Marshall 2002). However, organisations that are unable to show a link with and support from their constituencies may have their legitimacy questioned especially as they try to enter policy-making spaces.

Enlarging the constituency base in a virtual space means moving beyond notions of membership and representation, to promotion of common values

and finding intersections where persons converge in relation to a specific issue. Constituency building is enhanced because of the consistent flow of information, exchange of knowledge and sharing of experiences. The connectedness of online spaces further provides greater avenues for alliance building and bringing together resources of different CSOs behind a specific agenda.

Enlarging constituencies guards against the perception of elite capture, and can create the kind of critical mass needed to push for policy changes. Enlarging constituencies has the effect of changing the power dynamic between states and citizens, where CSOs are no longer waiting to be invited to policy making spaces but are creating dynamic spaces where issues are brought to the forefront, compelling governments to come to the table.

The immediacy of digital communications increases democracy and enables direct access and greater engagement with diverse constituents who are able to interact with each other, share ideas, develop common understanding of the issues and suggest strategies for change. Even organisations who do not engage directly in policy work are able to create perceptible shifts in attitudes and practices among their constituents which can significantly impact change.

One such organisation is the Pixel Project: a complete virtual, volunteer-led global 501(c)3 non-profit organisation whose mission is to raise awareness, funds and volunteer power for the cause to end violence against women (VAW) using the power of the internet, social media, new technologies and popular culture/ the arts.

Regina Yau (2016), founder of The Pixel Project, says that The Pixel Project's anti-Violence Against Women campaigns and programmes are all designed to reach and engage with specific constituencies which are, more often than not, non-traditional audiences that have previously not supported the cause to end

VAW. They accomplish this by building communities that are active and engage with the content and messages on an ongoing basis.

She goes on to note that one of their major strategies for enlarging their constituencies is by curating specific campaigns as platforms, using Google Hangouts or blog series to encourage persons with different interests to engage with issues around VAW. Some of these include The Read For Pixels campaign which targets authors, book lovers, and fandoms (especially in the genres of Science Fiction and Fantasy); The Music For Pixels campaign targeting music artistes, music lovers, YouTubers; The People and Pets Say NO campaign targeting pet lovers and animal rights activists and the "30 For 30" Father's Day campaign which highlights the role of dads, father figures and male allies in the fight against VAW.

Virtual spaces also promote expansion of networks which means that the composition of constituencies may evolve over time. SASH Bahamas is an NGO which was established to address HIV among high risk populations, specifically Men who have Sex with Men (MSM). The organisation credits its online engagement with expanding its network and outreach to include not just MSM but also LGBT and at-risk youth. Based on these expanded constituencies, the organisation has rebranded itself from Society Against STIs and HIV to Society Against Stigmatization and Hate.

Online engagement also makes it possible for marginalized groups who face stigma and discrimination to easily find a community where they can access resources and information, share experiences and get support. Further, closed Facebook groups provide safe spaces where persons can more easily highlight their issues openly in a supportive environment.

The Women's Caucus, a Trinidad and Tobago-based organisation whose constituents consist of lesbian, bisexual women and women who love women, have used their closed Facebook group to promote advocacy and empowerment initiatives. The online presence also buttresses their physical

support and networking meetings by providing virtual sharing of information and provision of support.

Similarly, I am One, another organisation whose constituents consist of LGBT and sexual and gender minorities in Trinidad and Tobago, has found their online presence particularly useful for conducting community-building projects such as their photography series and fostering community conversations by sharing news stories and interest pieces. The use of photographs, personal stories and art is a very effective strategy in helping deepen understanding of issues related to marginalized groups and serves to drive social movements and activism in a way that a policy brief cannot.

Domestic Violence Survivors Reaching Out (DVSRO), based in Trinidad and Tobago, also uses a closed Facebook group where their members provide ongoing support and encouragement to each other as well as educating each other on their rights and options. These closed spaces also provide security for women in dangerous situations and provide them with an avenue to reach out and find help, especially in cases where their movement may be restricted by their abusers.

Strategies used by Caribbean CSOs to legitimize virtual constituencies

For CSOs dealing with issues related to women and gender, the virtual space presents a unique opportunity to challenge entrenched attitudes and beliefs - which are the driving forces of gender discrimination. Social platforms have allowed the 'personal' - through the sharing of stories - to significantly impact the way lay-persons understand the political.

Building strong constituencies in the virtual space means giving them the opportunity to participate in the growth of the organisation. While some CSOs use social media platforms as a way to recruit members to the organisation, there are ways in which virtual constituencies, who are not tied to the governance structures of organisations, can contribute to shaping and influencing CSO strategies.

In the following, we will highlight the ways in which Caribbean-based CSOs are defining their constituencies and how their engagement strategies with their online constituencies serve to build the legitimacy of these entities and enlarge the constituency base.

Methodology

Having previously interacted with several CSOs through my organisation -The WomenSpeak Project - and followed their online activity, I had a frame of reference for the types of engagement strategies used by these organisations. I further conducted a scoping exercise to identify additional CSOs involved in women and gender issues in the Caribbean with a presence on the internet, particularly those who were fairly active on social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. By examining the types of posts and interactions most commonly used on these platforms, I was able to identify a range of engagement strategies used by organisations in the Caribbean and internationally to communicate with their online constituencies. I used this information to generate two lists: online platforms used by the organisation and engagement strategies used on these platforms.

Subsequently, I developed an online survey comprising nine questions using a web-survey platform. The first four questions were identification questions regarding type of organisation and contact information. The other five questions, a combination of multiple choice and text questions, sought to elicit information in three main areas:

- a) How CSOs defined their constituencies
- b) What strategies they used to engage with online constituencies
- c) Outcomes of their engagement strategy – at the organisational level or policy level

Approximately 60 organisations throughout the Caribbean region were invited to participate in the study. Invitations, describing the purpose of the study and a link to the online survey, were first sent to organisations via email. However, few organisations responded via this method. Several organisations were then contacted via their Facebook pages which yielded greater responsiveness. The survey was conducted over a two-month period between April and May 2016 with a couple of entries coming in later.

In the end, 26 organisations from nine Caribbean countries completed the online survey. Where necessary, I followed up with respondents to clarify information included in the survey responses and verified this information by examining Facebook and Twitter posts, blogs, related newspaper articles and policy documents available online.

Findings

The findings show that CSOs are using their online spaces to build and legitimize their virtual constituencies in a number of ways including community building, resource mobilization, education and information sharing, monitoring and networking. These strategies serve not only to benefit the growth and legitimacy of CSOs but they are having significant impacts on the policy environment.

Several organisations surveyed have used social media to bolster participation in their events and campaigns. Online engagement not only presents an opportunity to promote the activities of the organisation but to build stronger bonds with constituents and involve them in growing the organisation and supporting the cause.

The Association of Female Executives of Trinidad and Tobago (AFETT) is one such organisation that has used their online presence to significantly expand its reach. It encourages engagement of their followers by inviting constituents (financial and non-financial members, female executives, volunteers) to participate and volunteer in their various programmes and outreach activities.

Their annual Women of Influence Awards which is held on International Women's Day each year, invites nominations and presents awards to women who have made significant contributions in business, social enterprise and leadership. The organisation also invites volunteers to become mentors for its mentorship programme for adolescent girls. This provides an avenue for engagement with constituents who may not be members of the organisation but who want to contribute to specific objectives of the organisation.

Similarly, through their engagement with their virtual constituents, organisations such as S.T.R.A.W Inc Centre for Young Women (The Bahamas), I'm Glad I'm a Girl (Jamaica) and The Lily Foundation for Human Development (Tobago) have not only received referrals for girls and at-risk youth to participate in their programmes, but have also been able to secure financial contributions from local and international donors and volunteers to advance the work of the organisation.



I Am a Girl Barbados, whose constituencies include girls, parents/guardians and other youth-focused CSOs, have been able to use their online platforms to develop strategic alliances with their constituents in order to win support for key actions. After sharing a poster¹ on their social media sites calling for the development of a sex offender registry, they received a number of inquiries from other CSOs and business entities wishing to

collaborate on developing advocacy strategies to advance the call. Other organisations such as Groundation Grenada who identified their constituents to

be women & girls, LGBTQ, artists and community organisers, have also been able to find collaborators for their projects, including visiting artist residents and fellows who bring fresh perspectives to interrogating issues such as women's rights, sexuality and social justice.

Organisations are also using their online platforms to promote and encourage participation of constituents in international campaigns, bringing international policy and strategies into the local discourse on women and gender.

The Network of Rural Women Producers Trinidad and Tobago (NRWPTT) has been successful in accelerating the reach of the United Nations Secretary General's UNiTE to End Violence Against Women Campaign through their social media presence. They were able to galvanize support for an 'Orange Day' walk in the town of Arima, where thousands, including the mayor and members of the council also marched. They have also been successful in getting senior officials of the Trinidad and Tobago Defense Force and Fire Services to publicly sign on and support the online HeforShe campaign which signals men's commitment to activism to put an end to inequalities faced by women and girls around the world.

Intersect (Antigua and Barbuda), a CSO which focuses on gender and intersectionality used social media to help organise "Orange Flash": a public rally in support of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence campaign which focused on rape, sexual harassment, human trafficking and domestic violence. Raise Your Voice St. Lucia Inc also mobilized online followers to participate in a public march to observe International Day to End Violence Against Women.

The digital space has made it possible for Caribbean CSOs to not only win more diverse constituents, but has also created an important resource in secondary constituents. Secondary constituents may be considered those who have an interest in the organisation's mission/vision, share their values or can contribute

important resources to the achievement of the organisation's goals and objectives. Unlike primary constituents, they do not have a direct stake in the issue/cause, do not comprise the grouping of persons in whose interests the organisation purports to act, nor are they the point of reference for identifying actions, decisions, programmes etc. (Constantini 2016)

Secondary constituents may include CSOs in different sectors, business enterprises, international development organisations, donors, media, politicians or other persons of influence. These entities bring increased visibility, goodwill, financial and other resources to the organisation and can be important collaborators and promoters of the cause.

Hollaback! Bahamas has noted that especially on their Twitter platform, many of their followers include international organisations and activists. Rather than try to change the composition of that audience, they have worked to build relationships with them. In 2014 Bahamas MP Leslie Miller made comments in Parliament in which he joked about abusing a former girlfriend, while other government ministers said nothing or chuckled in the background. Hollaback! Bahamas launched an online petition² and held a public protest calling for the Government to not only denounce the Minister's statements but to commit to putting measures in place to combat gender based violence in the country. Further, the organisation made contact with international partners attending CSW60³ and encouraged them to engage Bahamian delegates in conversations about the matter. The combination of media attention to Hollaback! Bahamas's action, the interest at an international level, and the pressure of social media chatter, finally led to some Ministers denouncing the statements of MP Miller.

United Belize Advocacy Movement (UNIBAM) whose constituents include LGBT, sex workers and persons living with HIV (PLHIV) have been able to use their international contacts to bring pressure to bear on the government to introduce policies and legislation that secures the rights of sexual minorities and

marginalized groups. In response to a motion brought by UNIBAM's Caleb Orozco challenging the constitutionality of laws which criminalize homosexuality, a government minister, Anthony 'Boots' Martinez was videotaped making statements to the effect that the government of Belize would never recognize the legality of homosexuality because it was against God's law. The video was sent to the partners in the UK and later an article was posted in the Guardian.uk (Williams 2011) highlighting the statements. The organisation believes that the international attention contributed to key wins in regard to the status of sexual minorities in Belize. Since that time the government has approved a revised gender policy which is among the most progressive in the Caribbean region, identifying non-discrimination based on sexual orientation as a key principle. In the document, the government commits to "take special legal and infrastructure measures to safeguard the rights of vulnerable groups (sex workers, mobile workers, men who have sex with men, transgender populations, incarcerated populations, people with STIs and HIV, rural populations."

Apart from the influence of international and other prominent partners, these examples also point to the key role that virtual constituents play in monitoring. The virtual space makes it easier for followers to bring attention to issues that might have gone unnoticed by CSO leaders, and the online space is a very effective tool for holding public officials and others in society to account for their statements and actions.

In 2011, virtual constituents of The WomenSpeak Project - an online community-building forum focused on strengthening women's advocacy in the Caribbean - began expressing outrage that a local television show in Trinidad and Tobago had repeatedly played video of the rape of an adolescent girl by a group of boys. The constituents urged The WomenSpeak Project to bring attention to the issue and do something about the violation. The organisation posted a statement⁴ on its various social media platforms calling on constituents to file complaints with the Telecommunications Authority and the media house responsible for the airing of the television show. The call was widely shared on

Facebook and other blogs, while other CSOs also issued statements condemning the airing of the video. In the end, due to the large number of complaints received by the Telecommunications Authority, an investigation was launched and the television programme was temporarily suspended. The host of the television show was also charged with three offences under the Sexual Offences Act and pleaded guilty (Loutoo 2013).

Some online forums are specifically created to act as a monitoring tool. The Walking into Walls Facebook page is dedicated to sharing stories of gender-based violence (GBV) in the Caribbean in one central place in order to raise awareness about the magnitude of the problem. Sometimes online followers re-share the posted stories from the Walking into Walls page onto their own timelines and other pages contributing to larger numbers of views by people in their networks and greater overall awareness.

One of the most important ways that online platforms are legitimizing their virtual constituencies is through education. Many of the organisations surveyed highlighted sharing of information on key issues and having discussions on the implications of various legislation and policies, as one of the most important ways they use online platforms. A knowledgeable constituency is essential in moving the agenda forward, deepening commitment to the cause and enabling constituents to become advocates. Twitter chats, Facebook discussions and community-building campaigns all serve to clarify misinformation, solidify key messages and help constituents become conversant with the language.

Equality Bahamas uses education as one of its major strategies. In the lead up to the 2016 referendum on gender equality in The Bahamas, the organisation used its social media to help constituents understand the implications of four constitutional amendment bills that would provide men and women equal rights with regard to key citizenship issues. While the referendum resulted in a 'NO' vote, the issues of women's equality, gender and LGBTI rights were part of the

public discourse over several months, forcing the entire country to engage with these issues.



The image (left) from Equality Bahamas' Facebook page⁵ explains the provisions under Bill #1 of the Referendum.

Powerful Ladies of Trinidad and Tobago (PLOTT), whose primary constituents include female executives and women leaders in business or social development, have used the

online space to highlight the outcomes of their pre-election discussion series, budget reviews and ongoing crime analysis and have established focus groups on crime and national security, the economy, and governance and transparency.



The 51% Coalition: Women in Partnership for Development and Empowerment – a coalition of women's organisations in Jamaica has used Twitter chat as a way of engaging constituents on key issues related to women's empowerment, political representation and leadership. Many of the coalition's member organisations such as We-Change, whose constituents include women aged 18-50 and LBT, also participate in the Twitter chats, thereby expanding the reach of the message and enlarging the constituency base. Below is a selection of responses

from their Twitter chat on the HeforShe campaign in Jamaica in May 2016.⁶

CSOs are also using virtual constituencies and the inherent networking capability of social media to bring conversations about gender, discrimination and related public policies into the national discourse.

Leave Out Violence in St. Vincent and the Grenadines (LOVNSVG) is an organisation which started as a Facebook group of concerned individuals wanting to find ways to take action to address the problem of domestic violence in the country. Within a relatively short time the organisation, through its online engagement, was able to successfully organise protests, peace walks and fundraising events all with the aim of bringing national attention to the issue of domestic violence. The organisation has also become involved in policy advocacy, engaging its virtual constituents to sign a petition calling on the government to expand provisions under the domestic violence act. Subsequently, the revised Domestic Violence Act 2015 strengthens protections for victims of abuse and expands the definition of abuse to include “any controlling or abusive behaviour that harms the health, safety and well being of the applicant”. There are also new provisions regarding financial abuse, which was one of the recommendations made by LOVNSVG. The group has also been able to impact the political landscape, successfully engaging politicians contesting the general election in 2015 to bring the issue of increasing the legal age of sexual consent from 15 to 18 to the political platform (Admin 2015).

Womantra (Trinidad and Tobago), another organisation that was borne out of an online presence, has been able to create a very vibrant, interested and activated virtual constituency by keeping the online community posted, engaged and invested in matters of gender justice. The organisation notes that often there has been an uptake of interest in certain issues after there has been a groundswell in the online space. In one such instance Womantra organised a protest in front of the Aria nightclub in response to an incident where a gender non-conforming woman was refused entry because of her mode of dress (Ali 2015). The action was covered extensively in the national media thereby

bringing national attention to, and discussion around, issues of gender discrimination, sexual orientation, gender identity and gender norms.

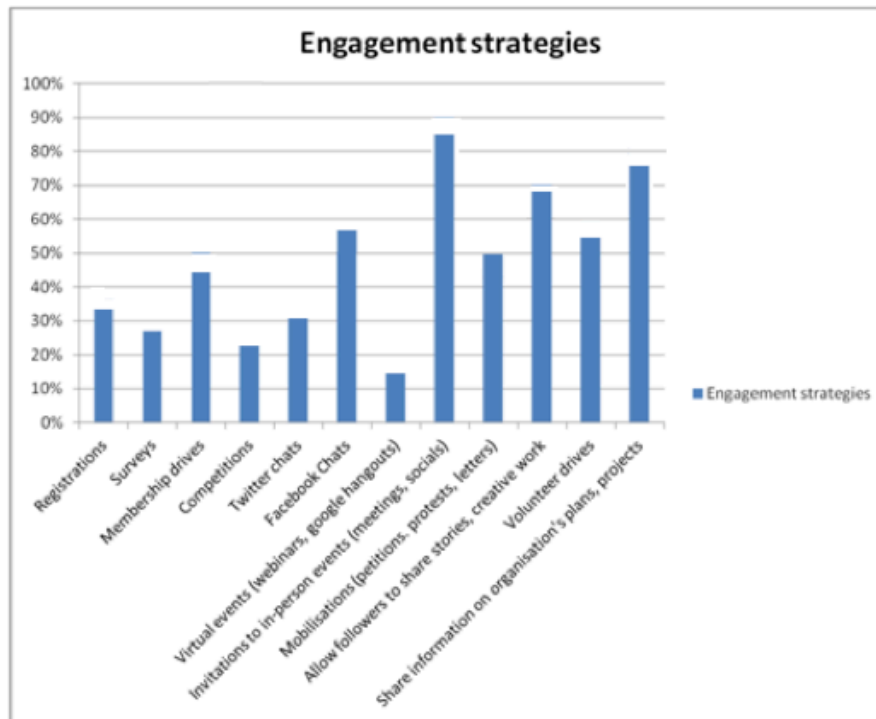
Besides bringing issues of gender justice to the national attention, Womantra has also been able to harness the power of its virtual constituents to initiate actions that can influence policy changes. In February, 2016 the group initiated a petition for the removal of the mayor of the capital city - Port of Spain - after he made comments suggesting that the murder of a Japanese national -Asami Nagakiya- during the Carnival celebrations, might have occurred because of how she dressed or behaved during the festivities (BBC Trending 2016). The launch of the petition coincided with action by another group of activists who were also organising a protest via their social media networks. Both groups joined forces and over 100 persons attended the protest at City Hall with hundreds of others signaling their support for the protest by joining the protest event page on Facebook. The petition garnered over 10,000 signatures and in the end, the mayor did resign with the new mayor agreeing to work with the activists to implement measures to educate public officials on gender sensitivity.

The action shows the power of networks, as the group's followers signed and shared the petition which resonated with others in the virtual space, though these persons had no affiliation with Womantra but found common ground with their values and the message conveyed in the petition.

Towards a protocol for legitimizing virtual constituents

We see then that many Caribbean CSOs have been effective in making virtual constituencies relevant, active and inclusive. An analysis of the survey results reveals that CSOs are mostly engaging in strategies aimed at encouraging virtual constituents to become more active in the organisation and its projects while also aiming to build the virtual community by encouraging sharing of stories and discussing issues via Facebook. Eighty-four per cent of CSOs use the virtual space to invite constituents to in-person meetings or socials; 76% sharing information about the organisation and its plans; 69% use community building

activities such as sharing stories and creative work of constituents; 57% interact with constituents via Facebook chats and 55% use the online space to recruit volunteers.



While engagement from CSOs to virtual constituents is very active, results of the survey might suggest that strategies aimed at learning more about constituencies and incorporating their views into decision-making is not widely practiced. While 50% of CSOs indicate that they engage virtual constituents for

mobilization (petitions, protests, letters), results for online surveys (27%), twitter chats (30%) and virtual events such as webinars and Google Hangouts (15%) show that these strategies are not regularly used as a means of engaging virtual constituents. Yet, these are precisely the strategies that can be very useful in getting information from constituents, creating deeper dialogue about key issues and educating constituents about key messages. An important part of legitimizing virtual constituents is giving them the opportunity to participate in sharing their ideas and concerns so that the organisation's strategies are, in some part, informed by its constituents. For CSOs that operate virtually for the most part, these strategies become even more essential, while CSOs that are more traditional member-based organisations need to regard their virtual constituencies as a unique constituency in itself, and not regard social media platforms as simply promotional environments.

In an effort to help CSOs think more strategically about the ways in which they can better leverage the power of digital technologies to advance their cause, the following is a proposed **protocol for legitimizing virtual constituencies**.

1. Identify and categorize your constituencies

Take note of who your virtual constituents are and what are their specific interests and stakes in relation to your cause. Distinguish between primary and secondary constituencies so that you understand how to target messages and use the resource of these two groups. Take special note of different demographics that may become more active in the online space. While these individuals might not be the ones you initially targeted, their interest may reveal key areas of intersection that signal a need to redefine or expand focus areas. It may also help to highlight a need or niche that has gone unrecognized or unaccounted for and that your organisation may be well positioned to address. Secondary constituents not only provide much needed financial and technical resources but endorsement from influential and well respected partners can increase the legitimacy of the organisation and the legitimacy of the cause.

2. Facilitate active participation of constituencies

Demonstrating the legitimacy of constituencies means giving them the opportunity to participate. Design activities that serve not only to build community and raise consciousness but that engage constituents in contributing their ideas, skills and talents to the cause.

3. Be accountable to and acknowledge virtual constituents

CSOs need to be accountable to constituents even in the virtual space. Showing accountability means keeping constituencies informed and updated about what plans, projects and activities the organisation is involved in and reporting on the outcomes of the organisation's work especially regarding petitions, funding drives and other activities to which constituents have contributed. If virtual constituents do not find the online space to be useful or relevant to their interests and if they do not feel

valuable or that they are in some way contributing to the cause, their participation will wane.

4. Use differentiated platforms to enlarge constituency

Enlarging the constituency base is essential to building a critical mass of support for the cause. Establishing special platforms or campaigns that tap into people's varied interests increases participation and helps your message reach a wider, more diverse constituent base. Campaigns that intersect with the arts, music or pop-culture provide opportunities to share your message with those who may not ordinarily engage with these issues. CSOs should ensure that their policy position, values and message are clearly articulated through all their social media so that new followers are able to identify with your cause.

5. Build knowledge within constituency

Knowledge gives constituents the tools to become advocates, and builds commitment to the organisation and its cause. The digital space has created infinite opportunities to educate and build knowledge within constituencies. Posters, memes, infographics, hashtags and video can help promote specific messages, deepen understanding of key issues and help constituents to become more conversant with the language of the cause. Hashtagging has become an important force in persons self-identifying as part of the cause. It is not just a tool for branding the organisation or monitoring engagement with a topic, but like #blacklivesmatter and #HeforShe, it also conveys more complex principles, reiterating a policy position in a way that is easily adopted and perpetuated in the virtual space.

6. Provide opportunities for virtual constituents to have a say

Constituencies are the point of reference for a CSO's actions. CSOs that purport to act in the interest of their constituencies must ensure that there are mechanisms in the virtual environment for followers to share their thoughts and express their views on what the organisation is doing and the issues that are important to them. Even if just a small percentage of

constituents respond to feedback mechanisms such as surveys, it is important to show that you are making an effort to have two-way communication with your constituents. Creating online forums where constituents can share personal stories that highlight the issues they face or report on their experiences accessing public services can be important ways in which CSOs can provide evidence of the need for policy and institutional change.

7. Exploit the power of Networks

Social media platforms are inherently networked spaces. This means that CSOs on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Tumblr are likely to have many like-minded individuals connected in these online spaces. This is a valuable resource, since 'friends' and 'friends of friends' present an opportunity to drive more activity and participation on the CSO's social media platform. As stated previously, a critical mass of constituents not only increases the potential resource base for the organisation but can also create a groundswell of support for key actions, initiatives or campaigns. In addition to designing 'shareable' posts that have the potential to reach other close ties (friends of friends, other women's CSOs) within the network, CSOs should take advantage of opportunities to link with constituencies that can act as bridging ties. These individuals or organisations are those with whom the majority of your constituents do not have direct links but who may be able to bring special resources and influence to the organisation and its cause.

How virtual constituencies are impacting policy-making spaces

Ensuring civil society participation in policy-making processes is widely accepted as good governance practice. Seventy countries have now signed on to the Open-Government Partnership, an international platform whereby civil society and governments work together to reform policy-making processes, harnessing the power of new technologies to ensure that governments are more open, transparent and accountable to citizens.

Despite this commitment by governments to ensure that citizen voices are represented in policy-making spaces, struggles for power between the state and civil society mean that CSOs have to continuously jostle for their interests to be represented at the policy-making table and to prove that these issues should take priority.

CSOs are shifting the balance of power in their favour by building constituencies that are energized and committed to the cause of gender justice and equality. We have seen that Caribbean CSOs are using digital technologies to do just that and they are indeed enlarging the 'space' for more diverse constituencies to amplify their voices and participate in moving the agenda forward. "'Spaces' are seen as opportunities, moments and channels where citizens can act to potentially affect policies, discourses, decisions and relationships which affect their lives and interests." (Gaventa 2005)

CSOs are using digital technologies to monitor the socio-political environment and hold public officials and others accountable on a real-time basis, while the immediacy and connectivity of social media platforms makes it easier to mobilize constituents building on the power of networks to extend CSOs' reach beyond their own forums and win influential supporters.

When social movements gain considerable power, build alliances or are championed by important national or international players, they can negotiate their way into policy-making spaces. Alternatively, CSOs may challenge policy-making spaces by forcing them to engage as is seen in the case of UNIBAMs constitutional challenge of the laws criminalizing homosexuality in Belize. At other times, a CSO's demonstrated expertise in a key policy area may result in them being invited into these policy-making spaces that are usually reserved for technocrats and powerful interest groups. In such scenarios, civil society's voice may still be stifled as the rules of engagement in these spaces maintain hierarchies of power in decision-making and weaken the 'oppositional consciousness' of civil society as they are made 'partners' in the process of

negotiation. This is why it is so important to maintain links with constituencies and ensure that the most important issues are not diluted or co-opted by individuals more invested in maintaining their position at the table than representing the interests of their constituencies.

Even when mobilization does not result in significant changes in participation in the closed spaces of policy-making, it has the potential to greatly impact agenda-setting, as a critical mass of voices in the online space spills over into national conversations and political actions (protests, petitions) demanding that these issues be given priority. When done strategically, movements make possible the creation of 'claimed spaces' where such activity in the civil space compels governments and their agents to meet with civil society on their own terms.

Apart from agenda-setting, engagement with virtual constituencies can impact changes at the institutional level. Consciousness-raising in the virtual space serves to educate persons about their rights and engage in more meaningful and personal ways with the issues. What knowledgeable and motivated virtual constituencies do is bring about a strong voice for change – where individuals develop the capacity to advocate on an individual and collective basis to create change within their own sphere of influence be it the workplace, the home or in their personal relationships. The 'personal is political' narrative so effectively delivered through social media is a powerful tool in transforming those intractable social norms that perpetuate gender discrimination.

Some may argue that while movements can bring attention to an issue, this does not result in sustainable policy changes that really impact people's lives. Despite the increased participation of virtual constituents in voicing support for a cause, the real work of creating social change involves getting a wide range of people, in different locales and at different levels, to participate in ongoing and transformative actions on a continuous basis over a longer period of time. The challenge for online communities, movements and CSOs is to be able to harness

the potential in their virtual constituencies to effect structural and institutional changes. This means that leaders need to be able to clearly articulate the issues, their goals and strategies and provide a blueprint of sorts for enabling individuals and groups to move the agenda forward themselves.

But people must themselves be motivated to act. A large number of Facebook followers doesn't necessarily mean an army for the cause. People need to see the value in contributing to the cause and have a sense of personal reward or collective recognition for these actions; that is, they must see results.

Further, the nature of online organising is constantly changing and being reconfigured as new technologies are developed and new modes of engagement take precedence while older ones become dormant. At the same time movements are dynamic, growing as key milestones or crises propel people into action, then dissipating as such galvanizing moments pass away. But continuous engagement with constituencies means keeping in step with these dynamics and being able to capitalize on the collective power of citizen voice to move the political agenda forward whenever such opportunities arise.

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Name and type of Organisation	Country	Constituencies as identified by the organisation * Identified by researcher	Online Platforms used by the organisation	Strategies used to engage constituencies through online platforms
51% Coalition: Women in Partnership for Development and Empowerment and Social Movement	Jamaica	Women in urban and rural constituencies, especially in under-served communities. Domestic household workers, women business owners and women seeking political leadership and board membership. We are a diverse coalition of women's organisations, including the long-standing NGOs Women's Resource and Outreach Centre (community-based in Kingston), Women's Media Watch and the quite new WE-Change (supporting the Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender (LBT) community).	Facebook Twitter Instagram	Surveys Twitter chats Invitations to in-person events (meetings, socials) Mobilisations (petitions, protests, letters) Share information on organisation's plans, projects
A Woman's Worth Registered NGO	Trinidad & Tobago	* Women survivors of domestic violence and their children, families in crisis situations eg. homes destroyed by fire	Facebook Twitter	Membership drives Facebook Chats Invitations to in-person events (meetings, socials) Volunteer drives Share information on organisation's plans, projects
Association of Female Executives of Trinidad & Tobago Registered NGO	Trinidad & Tobago	Financial and non-financial members Female executives in other organisations some members of the general public - men and women	Facebook Twitter Instagram Website	Registrations Surveys Membership drives Competitions Twitter chats Facebook Chats Invitations to in-person events (meetings, socials) Allow followers to share stories, creative work Volunteer drives Share information on organisation's plans, projects
Barbados Professional Women Crisis Centre and Shelter Registered NGO	Barbados	Female victims of domestic violence, human trafficking and other forms of gender-based violence; children of victims; women's empowerment groups - local, regional and international; general public		Share information on organisation's plans, projects
Domestic Violence Survivors Reaching Out Registered NGO	Trinidad and Tobago	The protective services, other organisations, Members of Parliament, the business sector and finally the people themselves.	Facebook Website	Registrations Membership drives Competitions Facebook Chats Invitations to in-person events (meetings, socials) Mobilisations (petitions, protests, letters) Allow followers to share stories, creative work Volunteer drives Share information on organisation's plans, projects

Name and type of Organisation	Country	Constituencies as identified by the organisation * Identified by researcher	Online Platforms used by the organisation	Strategies used to engage constituencies through online platforms
Equality Bahamas Community Based Organisation Social Movement	The Bahamas	Bahamians - Women and girls - LGBT+ people - Young people	Facebook Twitter Website	Twitter chats Virtual events (webinars, Google Hangouts) Invitations to in-person events (meetings, socials) Mobilisations (petitions, protests, letters)
Groundation Grenada Registered NGO	Grenada	women & girls, LGBTQ folks, artists and community organisers	Facebook Twitter Blog Website	Facebook Chats Invitations to in-person events (meetings, socials) Allow followers to share stories, creative work Volunteer drives Share information on organisation's plans, projects
Hollaback! Bahamas Community Based Organisation Network Social Movement	The Bahamas	Women - LGBT+ people - People of colour - Young people - Differently-abled people	Facebook Twitter Blog Website	Surveys Twitter chats Mobilisations (petitions, protests, letters) Allow followers to share stories, creative work
I AM A GIRL BARBADOS Registered NGO Community Based Organisation	Barbados	Beneficiaries - Girls aged five to 18; Parents / Guardians; Guidance Counselors / Social Workers; Like minded, youth led or youth focused organisations and NGOs; and, Civil Society generally.	Facebook Twitter Instagram Blog Website Other	Registrations Membership drives Facebook Chats Invitations to in-person events (meetings, socials) Allow followers to share stories, creative work Volunteer drives Share information on organisation's plans, projects
I Am One T&T Registered NGO Community Based Organisation Online Community	Trinidad and Tobago	LGBT people in Trinidad and Tobago (broadly gender and sexual minorities)	Facebook Twitter Instagram	Registrations Facebook Chats Invitations to in-person events (meetings, socials) Allow followers to share stories, creative work Volunteer drives Share information on organisation's plans, projects
I'm Glad I'm a Girl Registered NGO	Jamaica	Child Development Agency, CISOCA, Women's Centre, Eve for Life Jamaica, UN Women, FRIDA, Family Planning Board, are some of the entities that we partner with. However we Advocate for women and girls in Jamaica and the camp caters to girls age 13 to 17.	Facebook Twitter Website	Twitter chats Facebook Chats Invitations to in-person events (meetings, socials) Share information on organisation's plans, projects

Simone Leid: Legitimizing Virtual Constituencies: How CSOs are Using Digital Technologies to Enlarge the Space for Citizen Participation in Women and Gender Issues in the Caribbean

Name and type of Organisation	Country	Constituencies as identified by the organisation * Identified by researcher	Online Platforms used by the organisation	Strategies used to engage constituencies through online platforms
Intersect Online Community	Antigua and Barbuda	Marginalized persons in Antigua and Barbuda, Women	Facebook Twitter Instagram	Twitter chats Facebook Chats Invitations to in-person events (meetings, socials) Mobilisations (petitions, protests, letters) Allow followers to share stories, creative work Share information on organisation's plans, projects
Leave Out Violence in SVG Association Registered NGO	St. Vincent & the Grenadines	Our mandate is a focus on domestic violence/ child abuse, however we also address the youth on matters relating to violence and crime.	Facebook Instagram Website	Membership drives Competitions Facebook Chats Virtual events (webinars, Google Hangouts) Invitations to in-person events (meetings, socials) Mobilisations (petitions, protests, letters) Allow followers to share stories, creative work Volunteer drives Share information on organisation's plans, projects
Network of NGOs of Trinidad and Tobago for the Advancement of Women Network	Trinidad and Tobago	organisations and individuals who support the advancement of women and girls	Facebook Twitter Website	Invitations to in-person events (meetings, socials) Mobilisations (petitions, protests, letters) Allow followers to share stories, creative work Volunteer drives Share information on organisation's plans, projects
Network of Rural Women Producers Trinidad and Tobago Registered NGO Network	Trinidad and Tobago	women and girls, rural communities, national, regional and international forums	Facebook Twitter Instagram Blog Website	Surveys Competitions Facebook Chats Virtual events (webinars, Google Hangouts) Invitations to in-person events (meetings, socials) Mobilisations (petitions, protests, letters) Share information on organisation's plans, projects

Name and type of Organisation	Country	Constituencies as identified by the organisation * Identified by researcher	Online Platforms used by the organisation	Strategies used to engage constituencies through online platforms
Powerful Ladies of Trinidad and Tobago Registered NGO Online Community Network Social Movement Social Enterprise	Trinidad and Tobago	The members of our Network PLOTters: Established female executives / leaders, who for at least five years have either: - owned and operated their own business - led or sat as a member of an Executive Leadership Team. Individuals who have a keen interest in: - Assisting fellow members in dealing with the unique challenges many female leaders face in the business world - Making a valuable contribution to (primarily female related) social development causes and projects. Includes leaders of commercial and non-profit organisations, entrepreneurs, self-employed persons and free lance professionals who have been operating on their own for at least five years. PARTNERS: Corporate Sponsors and partner organisations who provide assistance in the achievement of our objectives; through sponsorship and partnership on event and projects. Businesses keen on making a positive difference while leveraging their brand. Youth PLOTters Young professionals ages 18-35 seeking mentorship, networking opportunities and projects they can volunteer on. Online Community: Members and Friends of PLOTT who keep abreast of our activities, provide valuable feedback and assist with the organisation's visibility.	Facebook Website Other	Registrations Surveys Membership drives Facebook Chats Invitations to in-person events (meetings, socials) Allow followers to share stories, creative work Volunteer drives Share information on organisation's plans, projects
Raise Your Voice Saint Lucia Inc Registered NGO	St. Lucia	Women and Children specifically those who are victims of rape, domestic violence, child physical and sexual abuse and those who victims are denied swift justice.	Facebook Twitter Website	Membership drives Facebook Chats Invitations to in-person events (meetings, socials) Mobilisations (petitions, protests, letters) Allow followers to share stories, creative work Volunteer drives Share information on organisation's plans, projects

Simone Leid: Legitimizing Virtual Constituencies: How CSOs are Using Digital Technologies to Enlarge the Space for Citizen Participation in Women and Gender Issues in the Caribbean

Name and type of Organisation	Country	Constituencies as identified by the organisation * Identified by researcher	Online Platforms used by the organisation	Strategies used to engage constituencies through online platforms
S.T.R.A.W. Inc. Center for Young Women Registered NGO Community-Based Organisation	The Bahamas	At-risk adolescent, teen girls and school-attending young women throughout New Providence and the outer islands of The Bahamas.	Facebook Twitter Website	Registrations Surveys Membership drives Competitions Facebook Chats Virtual events (webinars, Google Hangouts) Invitations to in-person events (meetings, socials) Allow followers to share stories, creative work Volunteer drives Share information on organisation's plans, projects
SASH Bahamas Registered NGO Community Based Organisation	The Bahamas	LGBTIQ At Risk youth (17-24) PLHIV	Facebook Website	Invitations to in-person events (meetings, socials) Volunteer drives
The Lily Foundation for Human Development • • Registered NGO	Trinidad and Tobago	Tobago Trinidad The Caribbean	Facebook Twitter Instagram Website Other	Registrations Membership drives Twitter chats Invitations to in-person events (meetings, socials) Allow followers to share stories, creative work Volunteer drives Share information on organisation's plans, projects
United Belize Advocacy Movement (UNIBAM) Registered NGO	Belize	LGBT Sex workers PLHIV	Facebook Twitter Blog Website	Facebook Chats Mobilisations (petitions, protests, letters)
Walking into Walls Online Community	Barbados /Caribbean	Caribbean women	Facebook	Membership drives Allow followers to share stories, creative work
We-Change Community Based Organisation	Jamaica	Jamaican women 18-50 LBT Women	Facebook Twitter	Registrations Twitter chats Invitations to in-person events (meetings, socials) Mobilisations (petitions, protests, letters) Allow followers to share stories, creative work Volunteer drives

Name and type of Organisation	Country	Constituencies as identified by the organisation * Identified by researcher	Online Platforms used by the organisation	Strategies used to engage constituencies through online platforms
WOMANTRA Registered NGO Online Community	Trinidad and Tobago	The Facebook group includes members from all over the Caribbean region as well as other countries in the world. The core on the ground activism however, which is still in the developmental phase in a lot of ways, is based in Trinidad and Tobago. Our members are largely women who are invested in women's equality and gender justice, either as activists or just as concerned citizens.	Facebook Twitter Website	Registrations Facebook Chats Invitations to in-person events (meetings, socials) Mobilisations (petitions, protests, letters) Allow followers to share stories, creative work Share information on organisation's plans, projects
Women's Caucus of Trinidad & Tobago Registered NGO	Trinidad and Tobago	Lesbian, bi- and other women who love women	Facebook Other	Membership drives Competitions Invitations to in-person events (meetings, socials) Mobilisations (petitions, protests, letters) Allow followers to share stories, creative work Share information on organisation's plans, projects
Women Inc Registered NGO	Jamaica	Jamaican women in general; focus on survivors of violence (e.g., sexual assault, intimate partner violence).	Facebook Twitter Website	Allow followers to share stories, creative work Share information on organisation's plans, projects

¹ See image at <https://goo.gl/fmHv64>

² See <https://bahamas.ihollaback.org/official-call-to-action/>

³ The sixtieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women took place at the United Nations Headquarters in New York from 14 to 24 March 2016.

⁴ See Blog post <http://womenspeak.tumblr.com/post/11980486228/outraged-rape-of-a-child-is-not-entertainment>

⁵ See <https://goo.gl/J22uS5>

⁶ See <https://storify.com/Petchary/twitter-chat-on-heforsheja>



Enduring Sexed and Gendered Criminal Laws in the Anglophone Caribbean

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Abstract

Arif Bulkan and Tracy Robinson provide a legal commentary that challenges modern-day public policy making in the Anglophone Caribbean to build more gender just societies by rejecting longstanding colonial criminal codes steeped in racial, sexual and gendered discrimination. The commentary presents the work of the UWI Rights Advocacy Project (U-RAP), an outreach activity of the Faculty of Law at the UWI, a project focussed on promoting social justice and human rights in the Anglophone Caribbean through the use of strategic litigation as an advocacy tool for gender justice. This paper explores the work of the project in the territories of Guyana and Belize to secure the rights of sexual minorities.

Keywords: Anglophone Caribbean, strategic litigation, LGBT rights

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A body of raced, gendered and sexed post-slavery criminal laws, and their legal constructions of deviance and conceptions of punishment, shadow the modern Caribbean. Colonial state racism always rested on “gender prescriptions ... [and] gendered assessments of perversion and subversion” (Stoler 1995, 93). Given criminal law’s normativity and its repetitive and coercive gestures and directives about order, legitimacy and what is normal (Garland 1990, 252), it is not surprising that criminalisation, and particularly enduring colonial criminalisation, has become a consistent site for contests about the meaning of race, sex and gender, morality, personhood and power in the Caribbean today.

Many core criminal law statutes dealing with both serious and summary offences in the Anglophone Caribbean today, like the Antigua and Barbuda Offences Against the Persons Act 1873 and the Jamaican Town and Communities Act 1843, are amended late nineteenth century or early twentieth legislation. A period of intense law-making followed the end of slavery aimed at governing and controlling the enlarged free population of blacks and indentured workers in the second half of the nineteenth century (Paton 2015, 122). Some were the result of concerted legislative exercises systematising, simplifying and reforming criminal laws through codification and consolidation (Tallon 1979, 3). These efforts to rationalise criminal laws tended to produce more “compendious new legal codes that extended the state’s reach” (Marcus 2011, 511). Law reform was set within the anxieties of colonial elites about freed blacks and Indian indentured workers and framed as concerns about the latter’s incivility (Hall 2002), sexual deviance (Dalby 2015, 136) and unwillingness to work on plantations (Munasinghe 2001, 10).

A small group of us, three public law teachers at The University of the West Indies (UWI), started a conversation about what we could do, beyond our teaching and writing, to question the normalisation of these enduring sexed and gendered criminal laws.¹ In 2009 we established the Faculty of Law, The UWI Rights Advocacy Project (U-RAP), an outreach activity of the Faculty of Law that aimed at promoting social justice and human rights in the Anglophone

Caribbean through strategic litigation, socio-legal research and legal education. The centrepiece of U-RAP's work is collaborative and strategic litigation that questions the constitutionality of two very different colonial criminal laws regulating sex and gender—one, an indictable offence which criminalises “unnatural” sex in Belize, and the other, a summary offence in Guyana criminalising cross-dressing in public for an “improper purpose”.²

The vagueness and imprecision of the Belize and Guyana laws anchor their durability and power as they are reclaimed and refashioned through layers of professional and lay interpretations and application over time. Both laws have produced what Nancy Fraser (1997, 279) calls “misrecognition” of out-groups based on gender and sexuality. Fraser says that

To be misrecognized ... is not simply to be thought ill of, looked down on, or devalued in others' conscious attitudes or mental beliefs. It is rather to be denied the status of a full partner in social interaction and prevented from participating as a peer in social life ... as a consequence of institutionalized patterns of interpretation and evaluation that constitute one as comparatively unworthy of respect or esteem. (Ibid, 280)

Strategic litigation has become one mode, even if a contested one, through which LGBT persons are seeking to deepen “participation parity” in the Caribbean. In this article, we provide an overview of and context for key pieces of strategic legislation that are underway in the Anglophone Caribbean, offering insight where appropriate to some of the constraints and possibilities of going to court. We further explore the socio-legal history that undergirds two of the laws that are presently being challenged - “the unnatural crime” in Belize and “the cross-dressing offence” in Guyana. The latter represents two enduring laws, whose power, we argue, is secured from the very uncertainties and opacity that characterize the laws.

Orozco v Attorney General and the “Unnatural” Crime in Belize

Most independent Anglophone Caribbean states retain a range of laws that criminalise “unnatural” sex—termed crimes of buggery, sodomy, and gross/serious indecency (Robinson 2009, 1). Although criminalization of “unnatural” sex existed during earlier colonial periods, the current versions of these laws in the Caribbean can be traced to the consolidated or codified criminal laws introduced in the late nineteenth century British colonial period. Some of these crimes are still found under headings such as “Offences against Morality,”³ “Outrages on Decency”⁴ and “Unnatural Offences”⁵ in criminal law statutes. Though sometimes described as “anti-gay”, most of these laws do not exclusively criminalise same-sex sex. Their origins are laws proscribing unnatural non-procreative sex between males and females, males and males and males and animals. The former British colonies disproportionately comprise the states that still retain such laws (Gupta 2008).

Unlike most Anglophone Caribbean countries, the Belize law does not use the terminology buggery or sodomy, which connotes anal sex.⁶ What is proscribed is the more amorphous “carnal intercourse against the order of nature”. Section 53 of the Criminal Code 1981, Cap 101, states that “every person who has carnal intercourse against the order of nature with any person or animal shall be liable to imprisonment for ten years.” The law conflates sex with animals with sex between persons, while also dispensing with any requirement of lack of consent to prove the latter offence.

Section 53 can be traced to the Criminal Code 1888. Its language is very similar to the well-known section 377 of the Indian Penal Code of 1860 which was drafted by Thomas Babington Macaulay (Skuy 1998, 513; Shing and Kher 2003, 209; Sanders 2009, 1). The Indian Code was the first criminal code introduced in the British colonies and its provisions, including that on unnatural offences, became a model law for other colonies, mostly in Asia and Africa. Section 377 reads, “Whoever voluntarily has carnal intercourse against the order of nature with any man, woman or animal shall be punished with imprisonment for life, or

with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to ten years, and shall be liable to fine." Some nineteenth century South Asian cases concluded that the "unnatural crime" covered anal sex alone.⁷ Some later cases took a broader view of the offence as including fellatio within its ambit, those cases have interpreted the unnatural crime as penalising penetration of an artificial cavity made between the thighs and mutual masturbation, with the hands functioning as an artificial orifice.⁸

Despite the similarities, the origins of the Belize law are distinct from the Indian Code. RS Wright, an English barrister and fellow of Oriel College, Oxford, drafted a model criminal code for Jamaica at the request of the Colonial Office (Friedland 1981, 302). His Code of Criminal Law and the Code of Procedure were finalized in 1877 (Ibid, 319). The Jamaica Legislative Council passed the model laws two years later but they were never brought into force and were ultimately repealed. What Martin Friedland describes as the "forgotten" Wright code was adopted not only in British Honduras, but also Tobago, St. Lucia and British Guiana (Ibid, 337-338). Wright's Code was a sharp departure from other 19th century codes on issues of law and morality. The latter heavily criminalised crimes against morality whereas Wright took a much more liberal view of issues like abortion, suicide and "unnatural" sex (Ibid, 327-328). Notably, Wright included buggery without consent in the section "Public Nuisances" with a maximum of two years (Ibid).

This background may partly explain why the 1888 Criminal Code for British Honduras only criminalized *non-consensual* carnal intercourse against the order of nature *with a person*. Section 65 of the Criminal Code 1888 provided that "Whosoever is convicted of unnatural carnal knowledge of any person, *with force or without the consent of such person*, shall be liable to imprisonment with hard labour for life, and in the discretion of the Court to flogging" (emphasis added). Ordinance 14 of 1944 repealed this requirement of proving force or a lack of consent and added bestiality to the definition of the unnatural crime. Another distinctive feature of the 1888 Criminal Code and later amendments in

Belize is that they never included the offence of gross indecency. In 1885 in England, what is often known as the Labouchere Amendment was enacted, criminalising “gross indecency” between males. This amendment represented a shift from “unnatural” sex in general, towards criminalising sex between men. Most colonies followed suit, but not British Honduras. There was virtually no change to the crime of carnal intercourse against the order of nature in the period after 1944 and prior to litigation in 2010.⁹

Orozco v Attorney General, filed in 2010, is the result of a collaboration between U-RAP, the United Belize Advocacy Movement (UNIBAM), its Executive Director, Caleb Orozco, and lawyers both in Belize and the wider Caribbean,¹⁰ which challenges the constitutionality of the said section 53. Before the case was filed, we spent approximately three years doing research and assessing whether and where litigation would be worthwhile. We participated in several dialogues with LGBT activists in the Caribbean, most hosted by the Coalition of Caribbean Vulnerable Communities (CVC), which also joined us as we consulted widely with stakeholders in Belize, including members of the LGBT community, civil society actors, HIV/AIDS activists, lawyers and faith-based leaders.

In August 2016, the Supreme Court of Belize accepted Orozco's claim that the continued existence of the unnatural crime is inconsistent with his rights to privacy, equality, non-discrimination and freedom of expression. The Court ruled that section 53 violated the Belize Constitution to the extent that it criminalised consensual sex, and the prohibition was accordingly “read down” to restrict its coverage to non-consensual sex between adults. Appeals against this decision have been filed by the Attorney General and the Roman Catholic Church and are expected to be heard in 2018.¹¹

McEwan v Attorney General and Cross-dressing for an Improper Purpose in Guyana

After the end of slavery, British Guiana consolidated all summary offences in a single statute. Another exercise in consolidation took place in 1893 as part of a

modernisation effort by the attorney general who wanted to create for the first time an official listing of all the laws then in force (Paton and Romain 2014). Part V of the Guyana Summary Jurisdiction (Offences) Act 1893 which covers “Offences Against Religion, Morality and Public Convenience”, and is further subdivided into sections dealing with police offences, nuisances, and other miscellaneous offences.

The “Police Offences” include vagrancy, roguery and practicing obeah and witchcraft. The Act explicitly includes as offences to be a “vagrant” or an “idle person”, a “rogue” or a “vagabond”, and an “incorrigible rogue”.¹² The defining features of vagrancy laws are their focus on “being a certain kind of person” and less what the person has done, and the wide discretion they entrust to law enforcement because of their breadth and ambiguity (Goluboff 2016, 2). Other vagrancy offences classified as “Police Offences” are assembling in a public way for disorderly purpose and not dispersing when required, loitering about a shop, loitering about in any street or public place for the purpose of prostitution, and lying or loitering in a highway, yard or other place and not being able to give a satisfactory account of yourself.¹³ Vagrancy laws targeted the former slaves and were used to curtail the mobility of Indian indentured workers and keep them close to the plantations (Munasinghe 2001, 10).

Section 153(1) of the Summary Jurisdiction (Offences) Act falls within the “Police Offences” section and covers 49 separate “minor offences, chiefly in Towns” that give rise to a fine of not less than G\$7,000 and not more than G\$15,000. The long list includes offences such as flying a kite in a public way, beating a mat in a public way and grooming an animal on a public way. Historians Diana Paton and Gemma Roman note that section 153 reproduced provisions from an ever-harsher British police law (Paton and Romain 2014). Like many laws dealing with small or minor charges in the post slavery period, this one targets the urban poor. Patrick Bryan (2000, 28) observes that such laws were “especially important in an urban setting, when employment opportunities are limited.”

The 47th offence, found in section 153(1) (xlvii), is that of “being a man, in any public way or public place, for any improper purpose, appears in female attire; or being a woman, in any public way or public place, for any improper purpose, appears in male attire”.¹⁴ Framed in less plain terms, the cross-dressing offence was also one of vagrancy. It was an entirely new offence in 1893. It was not uncommon to include new provisions in consolidation exercises. The reason for the introduction of this cross-dressing offence in 1893 is not clear, but it was added while the draft law was being reviewed by the Court of Policy; the requirement that the cross-dressing be “for an improper purpose” was added to the draft clause during the law-making process (Paton and Romain 2014). There has been little change to this provision since its 1893 enactment, except adjustments to the penalty. In a small 2012 study undertaken by Christopher Carrico¹⁵ in Guyana, all the trans and gender non-conforming persons he interviewed had been charged with summary offences, and all but one had been charged with the cross-dressing offence (Carrico 2012, 16).

McEwan and others v Attorney General, also filed in 2010, is a response to the convictions of litigants Gulliver McEwan, Angel Clarke, Peaches Fraser and Isabella Persaud in Georgetown Guyana. All trans women and working class Guyanese, they were arrested on Friday, 6 February 2009, in various parts of Georgetown and held at the Brickdam Police Station over the weekend. On Monday, 9 February, they were taken to the Georgetown Magistrates' Court where upon arraignment each pleaded guilty to violating section 153(1)(vii) and was fined \$7500 Guy (approximately \$40US). The presiding Magistrate told them that they were confused about their sexuality and should go to church. In their evidence in the constitutional case, four of the persons convicted stated that they were not told clearly at any time of the ‘improper purpose’ giving rise to the charges and convictions against them. The fine was not a heavy one, but the pre-trial detention in the police station over the entire weekend was itself a form of punishment, to which was added the humiliation in court and sensationalised publicity the case was given by the media (Staff writer 2009). These hardships were compounded by the fear that criminalisation could happen over and over again.

Following discussions between U-RAP, the Society Against Sexual Orientation Discrimination (SASOD), the persons convicted and Guyanese attorney-at-law Gino Persaud, in 2010 an action was filed challenging the constitutionality of section 153(1)(xlvii). It argued, among other things, that this law violated the rule of law and the rights of the litigants to equality, non-discrimination and freedom of expression. A case complicated by a savings law clause that gives colonial laws immunity from most constitutional litigation based on breaches of human rights,¹⁶ these litigants have failed in their claims before the Guyana High Court and Court of Appeal and are awaiting the hearing of their final appeal before the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ).

The Power of Uncertainty

Though very different, both the unnatural crime in Belize and the cross-dressing offence in Guyana share the quality of opacity. The durability of these sexed and gendered criminal laws is not distinct from their imprecision, rather it is aligned to it as criminalisation becomes a pliable domain that can be reshaped to target specific sexed and gendered bodies in different moments. Even as the meanings of these vague laws evolve over time, they many deepen in their panoptic effect and repute as laws grounded in the norms of the society (Goodman 2001, 702).

Chief Justice Benjamin, in his decision in *Orozco v Attorney General*,¹⁷ noted that there was no clear statutory or judicial definition of carnal intercourse against the order of nature.¹⁸ While all the parties accepted that the definition included consensual anal sex, it was less clear what beyond this fell within “unnatural” sex. This ambiguity engenders a flexibility in which the law can take one distinct social meaning, as targeting anal sex between males in the modern Caribbean. In Belize, vagueness extended to how the unnatural crime was recorded by the police. Although it was possible to identify that some males were arrested for having unnatural sex with females, the data collection methods of the police made it impossible to discern which of the arrests related to consensual sex and which to sex without consent.¹⁹

Examining vague sodomy laws in South Africa, Ryan Goodman identified as one of their harmful effects that they “create the sense of surveillance” (Goodman 2006, 704). He noted that they produce confusion and “help subject those individuals [gays and lesbians] to an abiding sense of their place and movements within the impersonal public realm (Ibid).” Carrico’s (2012, 4) study in Guyana also found that many LGBT persons spoke about how criminal laws affected where they lived and how they expressed themselves in public and private. The interpretations given by laypersons to the vague law layer meanings on it (Goodman 2001, 702). For example, Goodman spoke to persons who assumed displays of affection were prohibited by the sodomy laws, and even gays and lesbians who knew this was not the case felt that such displays would subject them to heightened surveillance (Ibid). Revealing how the male-centred sodomy laws impacted lesbians, one respondent told Goodman, “I know those laws are not as applicable to lesbians. But, besides my fear and my concern for gay male friends, I think that officials may find some way or another to apply certain laws against me (Ibid).”

Vague criminal laws such as vagrancy laws have always generated concerns “because they literally encompass so many innocent acts” (Roberts 1998, 775, 781). They are also treated as suspect because they “encourage arbitrary and discriminatory enforcement”.²⁰ This is evident in the findings of the Carrico Study (2012, 16), in which an LGBT respondent said that he and his friends were “hanging out” when they were arrested by the police. He said “It was “not like the police tried to round everybody up, but just these who were gay, and when they got to the station, they were told they being charged for loitering.”

In *McEwan and others v Attorney General*, the Guyana courts concluded that any uncertainty in the cross-dressing offence is not fatal and can be resolved on a case by case basis. Acting Chief Justice Ian Chang in 2013 affirmed that cross-dressing itself is not a crime, emphasising that it would only become so if done for an “improper purpose”. He said that “it is not criminally offensive for a person to wear the attire of the opposite sex as a matter of preference or to give

expression to or to reflect his or her sexual orientation (sic)".²¹ Rejecting the vagueness argument, Chang CJ (Ag) insisted that a court could determine in a given case whether an "improper purpose" had been proved and the meaning of "male" and "female" attire established. Neither Chang CJ (Ag), nor the Court of Appeal which upheld his conclusion,²² reflected on the *ex post facto* nature of any such determination, or to the discretionary power that such a vague provision transferred to police on the beat.

This aspect of the decision is not easily reconciled with the convicting magistrate's statements at the 2009 trial, which displayed an inordinate focus on the gender expression and identity of the litigants. Sitting in the Georgetown Magistrate Court, she told them that they were confused about their sexuality and that they were men, gratuitously advising them to go to church – all statements that could barely disguise the moral judgment of their gender expression at the heart of her decision (Staff writer 2009). After the 2013 ruling of Acting Chief Justice Chang, Gulliver McEwan, the first named litigant, maintained her concerns about the vagueness of the law. She justifiably said, "But the law really stifles us, because what could be an improper purpose? The trans community is very worried, and still fearful of arrests, in light of this decision (Press release 2016)."

Going to Court

The *Orozco* and *McEwan* cases filed in 2010, which are still before the courts, were hardly the first cases to challenge state disciplining and criminalisation of non-normative sexualities, genders and gender expressions. Amar Wahab describes the challenges a decade earlier in Trinidad made by Jowelle De Souza, a trans woman harassed and abused after arrest, and Kenntty Mitchell, a young gay man who brought an action for wrongful arrest and false imprisonment (Wahab 2012, 481-3, 500). But within the last five years there has been a spurt in *strategic* litigation related to LGBT persons, that is, litigation focussed on having an impact beyond the named litigants and their goal of realising some broader long-term change.

In addition to the previously outlined challenges, LGBT activist, Maurice Tomlinson also initiated three important cases. He challenged the refusal of media outlets in Jamaica to air an advertisement encouraging tolerance towards gays and lesbians.²³ He invoked the principle of free movement of people in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) articulated in the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas to challenge immigration laws in Trinidad and Tobago and Belize that excluded “homosexuals” before the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) in its original jurisdiction.²⁴ Most recently, he has challenged the constitutionality of provisions in the Jamaica Offences Against the Persons Act that criminalise buggery and gross indecency, a case that succeeds one brought earlier by Javed Jaghai and later discontinued (AIDS Free World and J-FLAG 2014). In Trinidad and Tobago, a challenge to the criminalisation of buggery has also been launched and awaits a hearing on the merits before the High Court of Trinidad and Tobago (Hunte 2017).

Strategic litigation is not a panacea and cannot be premised on romantic notions of Caribbean constitutions or courts. At its best, it is “a crucial “additive element” in the struggle for a better and more just society” (Cummings 2011, 506, 549). Strategic litigation achieves the most when careful thought is given to which issues to litigate and when it is used alongside multiple political strategies and undertaken collaboratively (Rhode 2008, 2027-8). It involves great expense, especially to civil society organisations who are involved in a range of important political work. Caribbean constitutions ushering in independence from the UK between 1962 and 1983 did not disrupt these longstanding criminal laws. They explicitly provided for their continuity, anchoring them as pillars of law and governance in new nation-states. The thrust of the modern Westminster-modelled Anglophone Caribbean constitution is the preservation of order through the continuity of law and governance (Robinson, Bulkan and Saunders 2015; Thame 2014, 1), and it was “surprisingly reticent on the subject of equality” (Bulkan 2013, 11-12). In addition, very constrained notions of gender, equality and citizenship are embedded in Caribbean constitutional structures (Robinson 2008, 735). The ambivalence in these constitutions about the very human rights protection they sought to provide is evident in “opaque redress

provisions, apparently unenforceable opening sections, generous savings of existing laws and copious limitations on the actual rights" (Bulkan 2013, 199, 220).

The risks of litigating not only in relation to imperfect constitutions, but in what are often conservative and inefficient courts, must be carefully weighed. Constitutional courts in the Caribbean have granted very limited access to LGBT organisations to bring claims on behalf of the communities they serve.²⁵ On issues of gender and sexuality, some Caribbean courts have had exceedingly limited interpretations of the equality and non-discrimination guarantees in the constitutions (Bulkan 2013, 11).²⁶ Sex/gender discrimination is comprehended primarily in terms of a comparison between males and females. When laws disadvantage both males and females because they are grounded in stereotypes about masculinity and femininity, they have registered as neutral to courts, rather than profoundly discriminatory.²⁷ The approaches of the Anglophone Caribbean's two highest appellate courts, the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council (JCPC) and the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ), have also been equivocal and restrained on questions of gender and sexuality.²⁸

More generally, the turn to constitutional courts is a global phenomenon that has been met with some scepticism. John Comaroff (2009, 193) associates it with modernity's excessive faith in law. Ran Hirschl (2004) argues that it displaces representational democracy in the resolution of fundamental political questions and in so doing short circuits important public debate. His worry about the "judicialization of politics" is not simply about overreaching judges but also the abdication by politicians of their responsibilities to make hard and unpopular decisions and transferring that responsibility to courts (Hirschl 2006). Constitutional litigation can also generate significant public and political backlash (Helfer 2002, 1832). Laurence Helfer argues that the death penalty litigation in the 1990s and early 2000s in the Anglophone Caribbean led to, among other things, the contraction in the international human rights commitments of Guyana, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago (Ibid).

Notwithstanding these critiques, and the limitations of Caribbean constitutions and courts, strategic litigation is not without value. Ralph Carnegie (1985, 43, 45), one of the earliest scholars of the modern Anglophone Caribbean constitution, warned that “we cannot do without a constitution, even if we can prove that it is theoretically impossible to produce a good one.” Scott Cummings (2012, 506, 522) argues that the power of strategic litigation derives from its assertion of ‘a vision (or multiple visions) of the good society, and frames the definitional question in historically grounded and institutionally specific terms’, like constitutions. He also observes that such litigation can provide an opening for constituencies that “face greater barriers to influencing political decision-making because of their less powerful status” to assert their claims (Ibid, 525).²⁹ Rather than sidestepping public debate by diverting matters to the court, strategic litigation can provide a locus for sustaining difficult conversations.

The *McEwan* litigation has provided an opening for one disadvantaged community, the trans community, to participate in political debates. The first named litigant, Gulliver McEwan, went on to co-found Guyana Trans United (GTU) in 2012 and to develop multidimensional social and political action to secure greater respect for the trans community. Recently, some trans women were excluded from the Georgetown Magistrates’ Court because they were dressed in female clothing, notwithstanding the 2013 ruling of the Acting Chief Justice that cross-dressing in and of itself was not criminalised in Guyana. The social justice movement, led by GTU, picketed the courts in protest, and GTU sought audience with the Chancellor to make a complaint, which was accompanied by a letter by the attorneys involved in the *McEwan* case. In an interview at the protest in 2016, one of the persons excluded, Twinkle Bissoon, drawing on notions of respect, equality and access to justice, said,

... this is violation to my human rights, of course. And if I respect the magistrate on his bench, I do think the magistrate should also respect me as a human being. It does not matter how I am dressed, or my lifestyle is not the case, it is that I have matters there, and he should listen to my matters...We will stand up for who we are.” (HGPTV).

Ultimately they filed a complaint with the Judicial Service Commission, which ruled in June 2017 that the exclusions were a denial of access to justice, a signal that a community which is devalued was being heard in new public domains.

In the Anglophone Caribbean some public conversations about sexuality appear to be at an impasse because of presumed overwhelming majoritarian sentiments. In fact, public opinion on controversial criminal laws in the Caribbean is often nuanced and contextual. Roger Hood and Florence Seemungal (2011), who conducted a survey in 2011 in Trinidad on the mandatory death penalty, found that 89 per cent of Trinidadians supported the retention of the death penalty; when respondents were further questioned about certain circumstances in which the mandatory penalty applied in Trinidad, only 26 per cent favoured it as a penalty that is mandatory for all murders regardless of the circumstances.

Ryan Goodman (2001, 642, 732) in his empirical research in South Africa, concluded that sodomy laws “have a far-reaching and self-reinforcing effect”, observing that “they create the sense that criminal prohibition reflects widespread societal interests even though ... those interests may only represent a small minority”. In Belize, the participation of major church groupings in the Orozco litigation, the organised advocacy of religious groupings with ties to the United States (Southern Poverty Law Center 2013), and the conservatism of some major media interests, gave the impression of very strong intolerance towards LGBT persons in Belize. Yet at the height of the litigation in 2013, the year the case was argued at first instance, a survey of attitudes towards homosexuality conducted in Belize by Caribbean Development Research Services (CADRES) reported that 75 per cent of men and 86 per cent of women in Belize accept or tolerate homosexuals, the highest degree of acceptance/tolerance in the Anglophone Caribbean countries surveyed (Beck et al. 2017).³⁰ Those high levels of tolerance/acceptance may not necessarily translate to support for decriminalisation (Jackman 2016, 130). Nevertheless, the survey data suggests that the strong opposition by religious groups may occlude more nuanced public opinion on gays and lesbians. In 2016 after the Supreme Court gave judgment for Orozco, the strong coalition of churches opposing the

litigation fell apart. Of the three church groupings that had become involved in the litigation, only the Roman Catholic Church filed an appeal. Neither the Anglican Church nor the Belize Evangelical Association of Churches has signalled an interest in further involvement.

Conclusion

Despite the drawbacks of strategic litigation, real value lies in the opportunities it presents for communities to mobilise, organise and advocate on their own behalf. Lawson Williams, an LGBT activist in Jamaica writing under a pseudonym in *Small Axe* in 2000, echoed the “need for the legal and social framework to adjust to accommodate gay people as a legitimate constituency in the society (Williams 2000, 106, 111).” He also added that “gay people themselves must be proactive in making their concerns heard and understood. They must set their own agenda for self-improvement. The issues must not only be addressed on a personal level, but as gay community. Only then can there be acceptance of gay voices as credible” (Ibid). We recognise that appeals to the state for recognition, relying on imperfect Caribbean constitutions—a core part of what U-RAP does—is constrained political work. Yet it is work that can open up spaces for conversations that include communities “who do not have a voice in the political system” (Balakrishnan 2009, 1). The criminalisation of gender and sexuality has a long arc that transitions into the modern Caribbean and nation-building (Alexander 1994, 5; Gosine 2016, 551). Challenges to its resilience are but one way to continue to talk about power, personhood, sex, gender, class and race in the Caribbean today.

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¹ The group included the authors (Bulkan and Robinson) and Douglas Mendes SC, former lecturer at the Faculty of Law The UWI, St. Augustine. Mendes continues to be a part of U-RAP as its Advisor.

² Belize Criminal Code 1981, Cap 101, s 53; Guyana Criminal Law (Offences) Act 1894, Cap 8:01, s 153(1) (xlvii).

³ Guyana Criminal Law (Offences) Act 1894, Cap 8:01, Title 24, which is part of a larger Part V devoted to "Offences Against Religion, Morality and Public Convenience".

⁴ Jamaica Offences Against the Persons Act 1864, s 79.

⁵ Antigua and Barbuda Offences Against the Persons Act 1873, Cap 4:21, Part XII; Jamaica Offences Against the Persons Act 1864, ss 76-77.

⁶ *Wiseman* (1718) Fortes Rep 91 (Eng).

⁷ *Re Govindarajula* (1886) 1 Weir 382.

⁸ *Muhammad Ali v State* 1961 All Pakistan Law Decisions, High Court of Dacca 447; *Lohana Vasantlal Devchand v State* 1968 All India Report, High Court of Gujarat 252.

⁹ In 2013, amendments were made to other sections of the Criminal Code to better protect children and persons with mental disabilities from sexual violence, championed by Kim Simplis Barrow, in her criminal capacity as Special Envoy for Women and Children. There was public anxiety that the litigation would lead to children, boys especially, being left unprotected even though the litigation, if successful, would only have the effect of decriminalising certain consensual sex between adults. Notwithstanding that misapprehension, the 2013 reforms, made section 53 redundant in dealing with sexual violence against children.

¹⁰ Lead counsel is Christopher Hamel-Smith SC from Trinidad and Tobago, assisted by Lisa Shoman QC, a Belizean lawyer who has been involved from the beginning of the litigation in 2010, and Westmin James, a law lecturer and member of the U-RAP team.

¹¹ The Government of Belize has appealed on narrow grounds which even if successful should not disrupt the overall decision by the Chief Justice that section 53 is unconstitutional to the extent that it criminalises consensual sex between adults. The Roman Catholic Church has filed an extensive appeal against most aspects of the August 10, 2016 decision. It has done so as an "interested party" to the litigation and must prove that it is "aggrieved" by the ruling in order to have standing to bring the appeal. See U-RAP, "Orozco v AG Update: The Government of Belize ultimately appeals the Orozco case on two narrow grounds!", accessed at <http://www.u-rap.org/web2/index.php/2015-09-29-00-40-03/orozco-v-attorney-general-of-belize/item/59-orozco-v-ag-update-the-government-of-belize-ultimately-appeals-the-orozco-case-on-two-narrow-grounds>.

¹² Guyana Summary Jurisdiction (Offences) Act 1893, Cap 8:02, ss 143, 144, 147.

¹³ Guyana Summary Jurisdiction (Offences) Act 1893, Cap 8:02, ss 153, 166.

¹⁴ Guyana Summary Jurisdiction (Offences) Act 1893, Cap 8:02, s 153(1)(xlvii).

¹⁵ This study was commissioned by U-RAP.

¹⁶ Guyana Constitution 1981 art 152.

¹⁷ Transcript, Supreme Court, Belize, 10 August 2016.

¹⁸ See also Basheer, Mukherjee and Nair 2009.

¹⁹ *Orozco v Attorney General* Transcript (SC, Belize, 10 August 2016) [15] – [16].

²⁰ *Kolender v. Lawson*, 461 U.S. 352, 357 (1983). For example, one of the critiques of the longstanding criminalisation of abortion is the lack of certainty about the application of exceptions, for example to protect the life and health of the woman. Notoriously, in the face of an uncertain law, health professionals in the public service often limit their discretion. Joanna Erdman, "The Procedural Turn: Abortion at the European Court of Human Rights" in Rebecca Cook, Joanna Erdman, Bernard Dickens, *Abortion Law in Transnational Perspective* (University of Pennsylvania Press 2014) 121, 121-22.

²¹ *McEwan and others v Attorney General* (High Court, Guyana, 6 September 2013) Transcript p 25.

²² *McEwan and others v Attorney General* (Court of Appeal, Guyana, 27 February 2017).

²³ *Tomlinson v Television Jamaica* (FC, Jamaica, 13 November 2013). At the time of writing, this case is awaiting a decision by the Jamaica Court of Appeal.

²⁴ *Tomlinson v Belize and Trinidad and Tobago* [2016] CCJ 1 (OJ).

²⁵ See Westmin James, "Redressing Supremacy: Challenging Traditional Notions of Standing in the Commonwealth Caribbean Bills of Rights." (2013) 39 *Commonwealth Law Bulletin* 305. In Jamaica the Public Defender, a commission of Parliament created to protect and enforce the rights of citizens, was excluded from the *Tomlinson* litigation in Jamaica, which challenges the criminalisation of same-sex sex (*Tomlinson v AG* [2016] JMSC Civ. 119 (Jamaica, Supreme Court, 6 July 2016)). This matter is on appeal.

²⁶ See also Robinson (2008).

²⁷ See *Attorney General v Jones* KN 2008 CA 3 (CA, St. Kitts-Nevis, 2 June 2008); *McEwan v Attorney General* (HC Guyana, 6 September 2013).

²⁸ When the Privy Council heard its first case in which a victim of domestic violence argued that the impact of the violence should be relevant to culpability for killing the abuser, the Privy Council allowed fresh psychiatric evidence to be adduced, but made no reference to constitutional guarantees of gender equality (*Ramjattan v R* (1999) 54 WIR 383 (PC Trinidad and Tobago)). In 2007 in its first consideration of an issue related to sexual orientation in the Caribbean, the majority decision of the Privy Council said it was ultimately a matter for Parliament to decide whether its anti-discrimination law should treat sexual orientation as a prohibited category of discrimination, even though the Trinidad and Tobago Court of Appeal had ruled that the equality provision in the Constitution guaranteed equal protection regardless of sexual orientation (*Suratt v Attorney General* [2007] UKPC 55 (PC Trinidad and Tobago)). In a recent ruling by the CCJ in its original jurisdiction, the court concluded that the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas demanded free movement of gays and lesbians within the Caribbean Community, but failed to invalidate immigration laws that prohibit entry of homosexuals on the irrelevant ground that they were not being enforced (*Tomlinson v Belize and Trinidad and Tobago* [2016] CCJ 1 (OJ)).

²⁹ *Ibid*, 525.

³⁰ Belize's adoption of the abandoned Wright Code, the absence of criminalisation of gross indecency and its much shorter history of criminalising consensual carnal intercourse against the order of nature is a reminder of the distinct legal histories within the Caribbean. It is worth further investigation whether there is a relationship between this history and attitudes towards homosexuality in Belize.



Rethinking Gender Mainstreaming in Development Policy and Practice

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Abstract

Perspectives on gender mainstreaming, like all matters of gender, are socially constructed. The politics of that social construction intersects with complexities of geopolitical identities, professional backgrounds and envisioned goals for gender equity and equality. In this reflection Jane L Parpart and Deborah N McFee both share their perspectives on gender mainstreaming. Parpart, a feminist scholar, is clear as she espouses on the limitations of gender mainstreaming. Her underlying concern with the inability of gender mainstreaming to provide that necessary shift in development theory to critically accommodate feminist thought is an observation that has dogged the transformational potential of gender mainstreaming since its inception. McFee, who comes to gender and development research via a practitioner grounded lens, remains invested in the need to provide a multi-sectoral language of gender equity and equality that recasts and complicates women and men in the development project. This co-reflection brings to the fore the disciplinary cross-fertilization involved in translating policy goals into action and the necessary global debates that situates the making of public policy in women, gender and development within the multiple realities in which it finds its relevance.

Keywords: gender mainstreaming; Anglophone Caribbean; gender and development

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Gender mainstreaming (GM), with its promise of gender equality, empowerment and transformation, became a central pillar of development discourse, policy and practice in the 1990s. Introduced into the development lexicon at the 1995 UN Conference on women in Beijing, gender mainstreaming was presented as a do-able and practical solution for gender inequality and disempowerment around the world. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action emphasized the importance of creating policies and programmes that would strengthen women's empowerment and gender equality. Defined by the United Nations (UN) as the integration of gender into "the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres" (ECOSOC 1997: chapter 4), gender mainstreaming was promoted as a solution for the persistent inequality found along gender lines around the world. GM became a key solution by which "the gender order of a society can be changed through deliberate and focused interventions at every level" (de Waal 2006: 210). The optimistic, policy-oriented "can-do" language of gender mainstreaming advocates entered the development lexicon, becoming a central pillar of development agencies. Indeed, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) argued that the "why" of gender had been replaced by the "how" – GM had to be everyone's responsibility and gender equality would emerge naturally from this commitment (UNDP 2003).

Gender mainstreaming increasingly became a key strategy for solving the problems of gender inequality in developing countries. Development agencies began to focus on integrating GM into all relevant development policies and programmes. An impressive array of analytical tools, including checklists, training manuals, Gender Impact Assessments, expert meetings, data collection and progress reports reinforced the assumption that gender mainstreaming was a do-able and necessary approach for achieving gender equality (de Waal 2006). Gender mainstreaming moved from being seen as a largely political project to being regarded as a crucial solution for development agencies committed to improving women's lives and fostering gender equality. The goals of gender and development were reduced to a technical fix, guaranteed to work when GM was applied with rigour and care (Cornwall et al. 2008). Gender

mainstreaming became a key development mantra, regarded as the best mechanism for achieving the goals of gender equality promised by government officials and development agencies. Indeed, it became “something that just needs to be done” (Verloo 2005: 351-52).

Yet the achievements of gender mainstreaming as a policy and practice have been disappointing. While there have been some improvements in women’s participation in parliaments, governance institutions and peace processes, these “successes” have often been temporary and largely ineffective (Rao and Kelleher 2005). Gender mainstreaming has continued to be seen as a key tool for achieving gender equality, yet the understanding and application of GM has often been framed on the assumption that gender is a synonym for women. Indeed, the larger development agencies have focused on projects aiming to mainstream women into educational, economic and political institutions. Yet these all too often produced little change in the ability of these women to leverage their positions into greater power, respect and authority. For example, the introduction of a gender quota in the Guyanese parliament increased the number of women, but not their ability to effect political change and to increase the power of women parliamentarians (Khan 2017). From 1990 to 2010, the African Development Bank (ADB) supported gender mainstreaming projects on the continent that used the language of gender equality but treated gender as an equivalent for women. This led to numerous projects where gender and women were conflated and gender dynamics were largely ignored, particularly the impact of gendered assumptions on the ability of women to take on leadership roles (ADB 2012).

While many mainstream development officials and programmes have continued to focus on women in gender mainstreaming projects as developmental solutions, some scholars and practitioners have taken a more pessimistic stance. Andrea Cornwall argued that gender mainstreaming has run adrift and “the heart of the gender agenda -- transforming unequal and unjust power relations -- seems to have fallen by the wayside (2007: 69). Deep-seated

and entrenched resistance to gender transformation has been discovered in many development organizations (Rao and Kelleher 2005). Nine international development agencies were discovered to have widespread, although rarely acknowledged, internal resistances to projects aimed at improving gender equality (Aasen 2006). Evaluations of UNDP gender equality projects reported effective opposition to GM at the more senior levels, both in 1998 and again in 2006 (Schaljwyk 1998; UNDP 2006). Clearly, gender mainstreaming has not been the hoped for solution for achieving gender equality in development projects around the world, especially in the global South.

Indeed, many mainstream development agencies have moved away from gender, focusing on women and especially girls instead. Girl power has become a romanticized “solution,” where strong young women convince reluctant men to take them seriously by proving their developmental potential through carefully tending a cow, building up a small herd and becoming economically independent.¹ This focus has sidelined efforts to bring men, masculinities and gender hierarchies into discussions of gender inequality. However there are glimmers of hope. Some development agencies have begun to focus on men and masculinities as part of gendered processes. For example, development NGOs, Instituto Promundo, based in Brazil, and Sonke Gender Justice, based in South Africa, are both working with men in partnership with women and girls to achieve gender justice. Promundo’s work began among the six million men “missing” in Brazil, largely due to traffic accidents and homicides - mostly gun-related - and in low-income, urban areas. This work with men on masculinities and violence aims to increase understanding and commitment to gender and social justice (Cornwall, Edstrom and Greig 2011: 13). Sonke Gender Justice in South Africa has not only focused on male violence, it has also taken a broader perspective, challenging the former head of the African National Congress Youth League, Julius Malema, by winning a case against him in South Africa’s Equality Court for his sexist and homophobic public statements (Greig 2011: 231).

The rising interest in addressing male and masculine behaviour is crucial to producing a more effective gender mainstreaming approach to development and social change. However, this approach has to include more than simply adding men and masculinity/ies to development activities and programmes. A transformative approach to gender requires attention to gendered practices and their role in defining and reinforcing the “legitimate and natural” wielders of power and authority in a given society. As long as political, economic and cultural power is tightly associated with hegemonic masculinity (as defined in a particular society), alternative gendered identities (including feminine men and butch women) will only be able to enter these realms as honorary men. We have seen this happen in corporate and political leadership where “successful” women do best when they take on masculine behaviour/practices (Cornwall, Karioris and Lindisfarne 2016). Moving beyond the identification of masculinity with power will require fundamental changes in attitudes as well as practices. This transition will have to move beyond the numbers game, where adding women to circles of power is seen as the litmus test of gender equality. More fundamental change in gendered attitudes to power, leadership and community building will require developing more gender-balanced and diverse notions of leadership and power. It will also require attention to gender analysis that can provide more gender-neutral definitions of power and authority.

Rethinking gender in a more inclusive, global and grounded way is thus essential, but relevant policies and programmes are also fundamental for ensuring social change. Policy makers need to take this broader gendered understanding of power into consideration in order to create policies with a more fluid, interactive understanding of gender. This goal runs against existing notions of “the normal” embedded in power relations and practices around the world. It will find few friends and many enemies. Yet development policies and programmes committed to gender mainstreaming can play a significant role in this effort, especially when they adopt a more gender-equal and interrelated approach to social progress. Programmes such as Instituto Promundo and Sonke Gender Justice are examples of how development programmes can challenge existing masculinist gender hierarchies. While gender mainstreaming has too

often been simply an effort to bring women into a masculine-dominated world, an approach to GM that draws on and contributes to progressive gender analysis, policies and programmes can play a critical role in the production of a more gender-equal and tolerant world (Connell 2016). While still the exception rather than the norm, this goal is worth pursuing and gender mainstreaming, when attentive to gender theory and praxis, can play a pivotal role in this effort.

My mentor and friend Jane Parpart invited me to share her reflection on gender mainstreaming. The idea of co-reflecting with Professor Parpart is an intimidating exploit. However, Jane is a feminist scholar who practices what she preaches and has invited the politics of another standpoint into her reflection -- in this context, a Caribbean woman, new to scholarship and more comfortable with the idea of being a public servant, committed to research centred on working through the responsibility of public policy to create equitable access for all. I come to this reflection via almost 20 years embedded in the national and regional public policy processes in the area of women, gender and development in the Anglophone Caribbean. My reflection on gender mainstreaming in policy and practice is unrepentantly Caribbean in location, and largely informed by my work in the Trinidad and Tobago state. Therefore, I choose to ground my understanding of the regional significance of gender mainstreaming in the work of the co-editor of this CRGS issue, where she identifies the importance of the gender work of region mainstreaming as follows:

With the exception of the region's history of feminist legal advocacy, mainstreaming stands as the primary vehicle through which discussions of gender equity occur in the Caribbean region (Rowley 2011: 56)

By the 1980's gender mainstreaming emerged as a globally accepted strategy to promote gender equity and equality (Woodford-Berger 2007). In the Anglophone Caribbean, like many other regions, the uptake of gender

mainstreaming was slow before the 1995 Beijing Conference. The Beijing conference was a catalyst for the regional buy-in to gender mainstreaming (Ibid: 124). The years immediately after Beijing, 1998 onwards, marked my entry into the world of Women, Gender and Development. I was then a young technocrat, very mindful of the hope gender mainstreaming offered to public policy around women and gender. It offered that missing language, a technical language --- a language that promised to rapidly and eloquently transform Women's Affairs from the public policy 'Ghetto of Women's Affairs'² (McFee 2017) into an authentic policy space within the machinery of government, with its own sophisticated mother tongue of Gender and Development. The promise of multi-sectoral technical plans and the complex engagements that established a logical means of integrating a gender equality perspective into all development activities of government was food from the gods for many of us who were public servants working in women and development, uncomfortably grappling with the implications of bringing gender and development to the Caribbean (Ross Frankson 2000; Barriteau 2003). Our need to provide a technical sense of the language of gender to our colleagues located in multiple sectoral sites throughout the public service was a critical driver of the regional welcome accorded to the promises of gender mainstreaming. This promise became even more enticing given the potential inherent in a discursive shift from women as the disadvantaged constituency of women and development to the comparative and more positive context of gender mainstreaming systems (Ronnblom 2005). Complicating our thirst for that easily translated language with the availability of regionally and internationally-derived resources; manuals, plans of action, post and pre-Beijing work on National Gender Policies, all fascinated with the ideals of gender mainstreaming.

The Commonwealth distinguished itself in this process. The organization printed clear, public policy-focused gender mainstreaming road maps with its first Gender Management Series printed in the 1990's. Every sector was represented in these publications and Caribbean-born feminist advocates, cum international practitioners, led the call for the adoption of the process all the way from Marlborough House. At times we were sold up close and personal. As Caribbean

public servants, trying to reframe women and development in the context of the ever-expanding gender mainstreaming vortices, we grabbed these maps, among others, and attempted to construct highways and bridges to our goals of gender equity and equality, in large part, by adding masculinity and stirring. The outcome can never be solely about whether it worked or failed or the extent to which the recommended policy action was the right fit.

Reflecting on the introduction of gender mainstreaming to our region serves as a reminder of the complexity of public policy-making in the personally political world of women, gender and development. The need for co-existence and reconciliation of diverse interests and agendas cloaked in the language of rational problem-solving never operates in isolation from the intricacies of our social reality (Mosse 2004). In these postcolonial Caribbean realities where activist, policy and scholarly work of women and gender has historically sought to respond to the conditions faced by both men and women, feminism has allowed a dialogue between women and men (Mohammed 1998). For me gender mainstreaming in Caribbean public policy is an ongoing deliberation -- deliberations that are boundless in their capacity to birth anew as public policy seeks to keep abreast with the tests presented by the ever-shifting genealogy of gender (Mohammed 1999). As the region contends with the conceptual and programmatic terrain of gender mainstreaming, a significant aspect of how we interact with these global structures is framed and affected by the processes of renegotiation and reordering required to fit our context. In working through the utility of gender mainstreaming, we are reminded of the need for the local to speak back to the global around global governance flows. To effectively frame a more equitable and just world, experiences such as the global thrust to implement the structures of gender mainstreaming need to be used as opportunities to revisit how we construct the geopolitics of global governance. In attempting to make meaning of gender mainstreaming in the context of the Anglophone Caribbean, the process challenges narrow conceptualizations of global governance as a north to south uni-directional flow of structures and ideas. As we seek to engage in this ongoing assessment, the impact of competing goals, narratives and expectations of diverse constituencies in very

specific contexts becomes evident. Our analyses must make room for heterogeneity of experiences and the complex forms that equity and equality must take in a global conversation. The Anglophone Caribbean is an excellent site for such an exploration. More such southern-based analyses are needed to gain a truly global perspective of gender mainstreaming in its many variations around the world.

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¹ Discussed at a meeting on ``Women's Political Empowerment: The State of Evidence and Future Research`` sponsored by DFID and Canadian IDRC (London, 11-12 September 2012).

² Mrs Margaret Hector, Minister and Member of Parliament for the constituency of Diego Martin West 1986-1991 described the portfolio of Women's Affairs as the 'ghetto of women's affairs' (McFee, 2017)



Intersectionality and Imagery in the Caribbean Context

[Dominique Hunter](#)

Guyanese visual artist

Abstract

In this piece, I discuss the ways in which my art practice becomes an opportunity to explore questions of identity - individual and collective – in ways that are specific to the nuances and complexities of the Caribbean. At the core of my creative interrogations is desire to facilitate the subversion of intersecting oppressions by providing new and innovative ways of merging critical thinking and problem-solving qualities through social science disciplines and creative expression. I use the piece to grapple with the ways in which my art is simultaneously an effort at developing a visual language that speaks directly to the issues of our region.

Keywords: Intersectionality, Caribbean, gender, imagery, visual art

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As a mixed-race Guyanese woman artist who identifies as black, I am constantly pushing back against the constraints of those individual descriptors. Like many others, I wrestle with the impositions of what it means to be black, what it means to be a woman, what it means to be an artist and what it means to be from the Caribbean and/or South America. Within the confines of those layered definitions exist even more converging systems of classification that have proven to be equally contentious and often oppressive. My art gives me an opportunity to intimately examine and engage with these intersections as individual and collective formations. Recent musings, however, have led to an interest in envisioning how those intersections would be represented if they existed within a framework of policies that facilitated examination from a national, regional or even international perspective.

Another layer of complexity is added when we consider the politics of location. What does it mean to think about these identities in the context of the Caribbean? In the context of prevailing ideas of the Caribbean as peripheral, an exotic 'adult' playground of bush, beach populated with indulgent natives eager to cater to the whims of rich, white tourists. In the Caribbean, where in the 21st century ad campaigns would still suggest that when the natives aren't busy pandering to the needs of foreigners, they could be found lazing around in tree-strung hammocks, drinking rum punch out of flower-adorned coconuts. This fringe land, often marketed as a tropical escape, allowed foreigners to live with careless abandon by offering them temporary respite from the stress of their lives back home. They were encouraged to sample the local delicacies, and they did. So what then do these multiple intersectionalities mean in the context of such imagery? Where does Guyana fit within the parameters of this manufactured imagery of the Caribbean?

I often question how much of the politics that govern the manner in which the Caribbean is perceived, is applicable to the space I occupy. While politically, Guyana has long since affirmed its position as part of the Caribbean community, we are far removed from most of the clichés associated with the region's

collective image. Guyana does not share the same history of tourism as most of our island neighbours because we don't offer the same kind of tourism "packages," that is, the white sandy beaches, crystal clear waters, beach front condominiums etc. And although we, despite being the only English-speaking country on South America, should be more closely aligned with our South American neighbours, we don't share much of their history either. As a result I find myself working with the awareness that, as Guyanese artists, we are quite frequently stuck in this strange, transitory space where our aesthetic, varied as it may be, doesn't quite fit anywhere. We are neither here nor there. Our decision to have one foot in and the other out of both spaces has resulted in a kind of perpetual identity crisis.

Nevertheless, in spite of the obvious differences in tourism "packages" and our obscure collective identity, the exploitation of both male and female bodies remains a common thread that ties all of the region's territories together. Traditionally, gender has always been considered within the parameters of binary oppositional thinking, a system that reduces everything to two inherently opposite halves. Within the context of this kind of thinking where hierarchy is implicit in its definition, one half gains meaning exclusively in relation to its counterpart. It is only when one succumbs to the other that the existing tension is temporarily relieved (Wood 2005). Men have always been the dominant half of the gender binary and even with the recent shift that has seen increased sections of our populations embrace a non-binary spectrum, straight men continue to occupy positions of privilege long denied to both women and gender non-conforming persons. Further, intersecting systems of oppression including (but not limited to) racism and slavery, have always worked in tandem to elevate heterosexual (white) men to positions of power while simultaneously protecting them from any form of exploitation that less-privileged groups would have no doubt experienced.

It is for these reasons that we cannot attempt to speak about sexism without speaking also about racism, which in the Caribbean is its own layered phenomenon, requiring that we pay attention to the internal hierarchies of the

region, and as a migratory population, the shifting racial hierarchies that we experience in the larger global order. Sex tourism, although, in its historical context, not advertised as such, developed into a wildly popular 'pull factor' that facilitated the exploitation of local men and women's bodies by perpetuating stereotypes born from slavery. As an artist I think often about slavery, about the institutionalized theories about gender and race, which in a white patriarchal society distinguish enslaved and indentured men and women from the others. I think often about practices of dehumanization and hypersexualization of men and women in the Caribbean. They were jezebels and mandingos, oversexed, promiscuous and, most importantly 'fair game.' Those stereotypes did not end with slavery or indentureship. Instead, they were repackaged and kneaded into the core of Western television and print media. The work of tourism advertising raises our own complicity with these histories as the groundwork for these exploitative tropes was completed long before they entered the scene.

Kimberlé Crenshaw's engagement with the category of intersectionality in her 1989 essay offers a theoretical framework that helps me examine all of the aforementioned facets and systems of oppression that threaten the experiences of men and women within the region. In her text Crenshaw echoed hooks' theory that we cannot effectively advocate for anti-discriminatory policies if we continue to address those systems individually. A singular approach would run the risk of downplaying or dismissing entirely the interconnectivity of each system. So although the term was initially used to describe the convergence of sexism and racism that effectively shut black women out of feminist discourse, it has since expanded to include additional and equally charged social categories that experience various forms of discrimination (for example, sexual orientation, class, socioeconomic status etc.). Consequently, recognizing that these systems don't function independently of each other points to a distinct shift towards a more progressive understanding of how fair and just solutions could possibly be formulated for the benefit of those affected.

So then, if we were to transplant the theories of intersectionality from its place of origin in the U.S. and hope that they take root in the Caribbean space, it would be imperative that we consider our unique geographies, our varied sexualities, our

complex history of slavery, our past systems of indentured labour, and the sweeping effects that followed as equally legitimate components in this discussion. It is precisely because of these multiple layers that we are only able to identify with the theories that govern Western feminism and gender policies to a limited extent. Beyond that we must find our own way, past the convoluted representations of our individual and collective self, towards something that allows for a more accurate likeness of our particular range. We must find something that considers all the facets of our lived experiences, past and present, if we hope to have any meaningful discourse about the policies that could be effective for us. My various bodies of work represent my attempt at grappling with what this notion of “finding our own way” means in such historical morass. To that end, each piece hints at a kind of inward contemplation for hypothetical outward resolutions, all in an attempt to dismantle inherited stereotypes we ourselves might have also been guilty of inadvertently perpetuating.

The examination of self as a reflection of society is an interesting concept that has always been central to my own creative practice. As a result, I've often employed intersectionality as the framework to help me to think about how and why gender-based strategies to redress our layered individual and collective histories have failed. Years before I had begun any serious contemplation of these issues, I found myself in conversation with an older mixed race (Black and Amerindian) woman who thought it appropriate to explain to me, in great detail, why I would be considered “spoil breed” (sic). This woman, whom I had never met prior to that moment, could not see how she had been brainwashed into accepting an ideology birthed from slavery, an ideology that insisted Black women (particularly from the region) were supposed to look a certain way. By her logic, I would be cast aside in the reject pile for simply being a skinny, Black girl from the Caribbean. Her sons would never show interest and even if they did, she wouldn't have it. “Bones is fuh dawg,” she said, blindly perpetuating yet another stereotype about Caribbean gender relations. I had been subject to similar but less blatant remarks about my body type all my life but for whatever reason, hers had struck a chord. And while it wasn't necessarily something that weighed heavily on my mind every day, it remained close enough to the surface that it

began to re-emerge a few years later during my time at the Barbados Community College.

After careful deliberation about the topics I could possibly engage with during the three-year art programme, I was encouraged by my lecturers to embrace a subject that had the potential to be thoroughly fleshed out over that time span. It was then I decided to revisit that encounter and pick apart why that particular moment stayed with me all those years. While in this state of self-reflection I became fascinated with the term “spoil breed,” so much so that it sparked a series of performance-based photographic works which featured me performing in what I referred to as “body suits.” One suit in particular (pictured) was constructed to suggest a grotesquely exaggerated and distorted female bust, spilling out of a corset branded on the front with the words “animal feed.” This piece became my response to years of endless body ideals being imposed upon me. In many ways I was using the work to draw attention to the complicity of both Black men and women in the continued objectification of the Black female body. I was also using the work to address the absence of black female bodies from art historical text and imageries in positions that were not servile. I imagined that if those bodies were indeed pictured, they would have been done in a way that emphasized prevailing beliefs of inherent promiscuity and sexual availability associated with black female bodies. The work therefore became my way of reclaiming representation (and the resulting power) while simultaneously employing the very stereotypes designed to oppress Black women to highlight the work that still needs to be done with regard to how Black men and women consider our own imagery, inherited and otherwise.

These concerns all represent equally important components of my own trajectory as I navigate this nebulous space of intersectionality and imagery in the Caribbean context. In addition to helping me understand the nuances of my own personal practice, they help me to think about the available room for the arts as a movement to occupy within this much larger discussion of gender policy. How could the work of creative individuals shift from simply being mounted on the walls

of commercial banks or in the lobbies of hotels to occupying a more dynamic position in the much larger discourse happening at national and regional forums? And how could it be done in a way that encourages the involvement of every demographic of society, particularly in a region where the widespread belief among citizens is that these discussions are disconnected from the realities of their lived experiences and therefore represent meaningless engagement? How could we expedite the process of dismantling centuries of internalized self-hatred, even as we fight against the unrelenting “outside gaze”? What would be the ideal point of entry that would allow for healthy conversations about all of these questions and more? The answers are not as elusive as we are led to believe.

Art comes from quite a long tradition of agitating change whether social, political, economic etc. We don't have to look too far back for evidence of such. The anti-Trump protests that have erupted since the result of the 2016 U.S. elections are proof enough that artists remain central to the effectiveness of movements that resist racist, sexist and xenophobic agendas. Consider the work of the many graphic designers, illustrators, cartoonists, fine artists, knitters from the Pussyhat Project and even social media meme creators during the last few months. Now try to imagine the movement without their contributions. It is an undeniable fact that much of the success attributed to those protests is linked directly to artists who were keen enough to identify ways in which their work could be used to dismantle oppressive systems that threaten both their singular and shared realities. A closer look home at the Life in Leggings movement, which started in Barbados, would reveal a similar kind of movement that used the power and reach of social media to shine a brighter light on gender-based violence in the Caribbean. What started as a Facebook hashtag intended to create a safe space for Barbadian women to share their experiences of sexual harassment and abuse, quickly transformed into a regional movement that swept across the Caribbean, gaining momentum in countries like Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, Dominica and The Bahamas. The resounding success of those protests represented one of the few occasions a movement of that nature was able to start in one territory and quickly spread across waters to set into motion equally successful protests in other territories across the region.

So what is the connection that I'm trying to make between the protests overseas and the occasional waves of protest actions occurring in the Caribbean? While it would be impossible to discredit the tremendous success of the Life In Leggings movement, it does call into question why the level of solidarity shown in this instance was the exception and not the rule. Perhaps the most glaring observation that could be made between the two regions regarding the manner in which these issues and the public policies designed to address them are considered, is our general reluctance or disinterest in engaging with creative practitioners in a way that could influence how those policies are decided upon and implemented. There seems to be a widening gap between policy makers and art makers, something that could have been avoided altogether if there was a sincere and serious deliberation of how a more inclusive environment between the two could be cultivated. Perhaps then it would be recognized that while the value of art is not necessarily something that could be measured quantitatively, it does not suggest there is no space for creative work in this discussion. Contrary to prevailing beliefs in the region, there is room for artists in the street as well as in the boardroom. In fact, artists have been keen enough to recognize the value of occupying space on the relatively "new" platform for activism: the worldwide web. This is a clear indication to me that creatives are ready and willing to embrace shifting dynamics if they present an opportunity to achieve the desired results. Therefore, any attempt at deliberate disengagement by factions on either side should, in my opinion, result in the same kind of resistance at home as we have been witnessing overseas in the past few months.

The take-away from the anti-Trump protests for us as a region is that, in addition to reaffirming what we already knew about strength in numbers, those movements have also underscored the power in both the still and moving image. These two categories of media have become crucial to the undermining of institutionalized patriarchal beliefs and practices. They are part of a sophisticated network of channels that allow us to address gender and race disparities by challenging the hetero-normative roles imposed on both sexes. Almost every successful movement of change has been dependent on a very specific kind of visual

language, one that was easily identifiable and accessible to the public. Whether it was a symbol, a logo or an image, some kind of unifying iconographic material would have been created to support expressions of solidarity with oppressed groups. And it is precisely at this point that the Internet, and more specifically social media, would have stepped in to function as the vehicle responsible for transporting said material, making deposits in various pockets across the world.

We need to work on developing our own visual language that speaks directly to the issues of our region. We must think of ways to inspire the same kind of passion about the victories and failures of those state and regional policies designed in our interests. We must find creative ways to dismantle the stereotypes of Caribbean men, women and gender non-conforming persons with the understanding that we are all responsible for reclaiming our representation. No more blindly subscribing to the pervasive and archaic ideologies surrounding the self-image we inherited from our colonizers, an image we internalize to this day. In the same way art, historical text and imageries were created to uphold a racist, patriarchal society, we too can use literature and art to model effective policies that could potentially change our narratives.

It would be in the best interest of every nation to provide the kind of creative incubators that nurture critical thinking and fuel the manifestation of those ideas. It would also be of great import that space be made available for those persons to shape a sustainable practice for themselves after their incubation period would have ended. Too often countries lose great thinkers and makers to other spaces that they perceive to be more appreciative of the work they are producing. And while in most cases the unfortunate truth is that artists are indeed under-valued in their homeland, we must still find ways to prevent further hemorrhaging of our local talents. Where governments fail to provide the necessary infrastructure to support such creative practices, the private sector must step in to provide a solution.

It is the mark of a healthy and progressive society when, despite being previously disarmed by colonialism, one can readily identify multiple systems that support any kind of creative contemplation and/or projection (whether through the public/private funding of art programming, workshops, residencies, grants, scholarships etc.). At the core of these types of initiatives is the capacity to facilitate the subversion of these intersecting oppressions by providing new and innovative ways of merging the critical thinking and problem-solving qualities linked to both the creative and social science disciplines. A shift in this direction would, in my opinion, signal a breakthrough in how they would have been examined traditionally, as separate and unrelated topics. Perhaps the acknowledgment that we should no longer consider the two areas as being mutually exclusive but rather complementary to each other, would be the kind of across-the-board engagement of creatives and non-creatives necessary should we hope to affect any real change in future policy making practices. Audrey Lorde (1984), in a brilliant summation, explained why our efforts would be futile if we looked to outdated models for resolutions to the issues affecting us now:

“The old patterns, no matter how cleverly rearranged to imitate progress, still condemn us to cosmetically altered repetitions of the same old exchanges, the same old guilt, hatred, recrimination, lamentation, and suspicion.

“For we have, built into all of us, old blueprints of expectation and response, old structures of oppression, and these must be altered at the same time as we alter the living conditions which are a result of those structures. For the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house.”

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Nineteen Eighties Hymns

For the IMF and IBRD and Ministers of Finance

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Keywords: women, economic empowerment, Caribbean, austerity

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I

I do not believe I am
a good man
a good bank
a good government
when my mother's tears rain
across the economy

II

A finance minister
austerity preacher
thinks that things will go round
if welfare weak

I wish he read the poem
(the one I am yet to have written)
about my mother
the women
nineteen eighties
sewing miracles
from foreign magazines
how they outfit
their girlfriends
find moments of beauty
in the depression
of corn beef dinners
and patchoi leaves.

I remember the congregations' sermons
that feed religions
and blind the prophets and preachers
who abandon children

I still sing hymns of exile and atonement
for the dark soul of adjustment
bringing false gods and their religions
to their knees.



Caribbean Feminist Disruptions of International Public Policy, Human Security and the ATT: An Interview with Folade Mutota¹

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Life...I don't believe you should just don't roll on
and roll off the earth... to the extent that you can
serve people and serve people well is the extent
to which you could consider yourself an
honourable person.

Folade Mutota

Abstract

Intersections of activism best describes the work Folade Mutota has dedicated her life to from the 1970's to present. In this interview she shared extensively about both her personal and public self. She reflected deeply on those individuals, places and drivers that shape the politics and processes of her activism over time. Mutota's insights on our Caribbean reality, international public policy and her civil society work around gun violence provided an invaluable resource for deliberating on the possibilities inherent in reordering the regional human security agenda by strategically integrating into it a gender perspective.

Keywords: Caribbean women; human security; international public policy; ATT

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Folade - Yoruba for honour - has arrived. For Folade Mutota, honour comes in service to others, a theme that repeated itself throughout the course of our time together. As Folade works out her honourable self, there are many women and some men who walk in paths that her service has made traversable. Folade's activism opens doors. Persons working in the areas of human security and gun violence in the Caribbean know that to invoke Folade's name only accrues benefits to their work. From Latin America to Europe to the United Nations Headquarters in Manhattan, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in Austria, to the Police Barracks in St James Trinidad and Tobago Folade affords a smile and all conveniences are accorded. Over time, Folade's work reflects her own passion to right injustices and the varied activist frames this passion has motivated her to take on. From Black Power² to the women's movement to the passage of the Arms Trade Treaty³ (ATT), her activism sits at the intersections of anti-racist, anti-sexist work, as well as a longstanding commitment to work against all forms of violence (community based, domestic, against women and young girls). Her work embodies the multiple fronts on which Caribbean women have situated themselves as advocates for a more just region, and by extension, a more just world.

Key to Folade's interventions has been her work on the (ATT) out of which Folade Mutota has become the name and face of feminist-informed activism around gun violence in Trinidad and Tobago and the wider Caribbean. Folade's interventions have not only been political but have resulted in significant institutional and conceptual expansions within the region. The United Nations considered Trinidad and Tobago's capital of Port of Spain to be the headquarters of ATT Secretariat, a moment that was largely possible as a result of Folade's national, regional and global work on the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) in her capacity as the Executive Director of the Women's Institute for Alternative Development (WINAD)⁴. Beyond aspirations of placing Port of Spain on the UN headquarters map, WINAD's work on the ATT was an essential intervention in the reframing of the regional gendered discourse on security. This work produced a compelling disruption of the masculinist construction of armed violence as a regional challenge. In addition to this, WINAD has been instrumental in starting a

public dialogue on gun violence and the need for policy to curb this violence. Their work frames these issues not as individual anomalies but as a form of structural inequality. Most significantly, WINAD's work has expanded the region's understanding of human securing as a distinctly gendered phenomenon. To this end, WINAD's mandate is one that highlights the insecurity experienced by women and girls, as well as the place of women and girls within the socio-economic and political dynamics of gun violence. Their work has fundamentally reshaped the region's understanding of gun violence as a gendered dynamic requiring programming, project formulation, and nuanced research and policy.

Before WINAD's work in the area the issue was understood primarily as hyper-masculinity playing itself out through the embracing of a hard anti-education image (Plummer, 2008). Globally framed as a Caribbean and Latin American based problem, where a region with 8.5% of the world's population accounted for 27% of the homicides (UNDP, 2012). At the personal level, in the case of poorer males, gun violence was seen as being a convergence of the following:

- Added pressure to display material wealth
- The intensified need to engage in the 'right gender script'
- An interpretation of money as the absolutely vital resource for a male in relationships. Therefore, much of his status was dependant on the equation having money in exchange for respect, loyalty and sex (Bailey et al. 1997)

In traditional public policy approaches to gun violence, men have been marked as the vulnerable constituency in need of attention. This approach has created a singular policy narrative, one where men, as the bearers of legal firearms, are called upon to defend the country from the fallout from the use of illegal firearms by contending with men, who were the bearers of illegal firearms; in other words, curbing gun violence is achievable with more gun violence. It is within this limited context that public policy becomes framed as a classed intervention, created to address a challenge through a clash of hyper

masculinities, in select regional territories. WINAD's work is an essential departure from such reasoning.

By forcing an alternative approach to public policy on gun violence, WINAD enabled Caribbean women's entry into very complex, regional deliberations on human security and armed violence. Their work brought to the fore previously unheard narratives of how Caribbean women experience, contend with, aid and respond to the insecurities of gun violence and crime. Under Folade's leadership, the organization has reframed the perception of gun violence from a challenge faced by two or three countries, to that of a regional, collectively experienced concern, in need of a shared Caribbean response, by highlighting the fallout from gun violence as a regional challenge, lodged in broader gendered, social, economic and political inequalities.

In August 2017, Folade agreed to sit down with me at my home in St Augustine to share some of her story. In the discussion that ensued, Folade's commitments to women, human rights, dismantling structural inequalities and the need to tell your own story emerged as some of the forces that drove her activism. Throughout our time together Folade modeled the imbricated nature of theory and praxis – as a fixer, a deep thinker and someone entrenched in challenging the inequities that now characterize postcolonial Caribbean realities. Folade's life and her work also provide a lens into the ways in which building a more just world, the geopolitics and history of the Caribbean demand a convergence of intersecting activisms. Glimpses of the novel spaces the region occupies as its citizens devise ways to challenge inequity within the structures of global governance, become evident as Folade shares her experience. A fundamental issue that becomes evident as Folade shares is the critical need for policy making in the Anglophone Caribbean to constantly defy our smallness of size by devising innovative ways of responding to globally-based challenges beyond entrenched, narrow, sectoral and disciplinary silos.

Folade embodies a postcolonial Caribbean messiness that seeks to productively balance a deeply rooted motherland consciousness with a deeply rooted belief

in the wonder and untapped potential of this region she calls home. She remains an Afro-Caribbean revolutionary, still very much committed to the 1970's work of eliminating entrenched, nationally-sanctioned racial inequalities which marked her entrance into activism. In her distinctive African influenced fashion, Folade believes that the Caribbean possesses an influential, distinct voice in shaping how the world understands human security. In this interview, although we ended up spending much time on Folade's work in creating a national and regional position in the international negotiation of the Arms Trade Treaty, of equal importance are the other themes that emerged. These included: the activism that guided her arrival at the issue of security, her belief in the need for civil society to ground national governments' policy positions within the lived realities of populations and the need for intergenerational thinking to guide movement building. All of these themes became evident as we grappled to parse the process by which a women's group in the Global South has become a flagship for international public policy making in human security? But first – Folade, her process of becoming, her years of advocacy around black power, and how these have served as a launching pad for some of her more recent work.

August 2017

Folade Mutota (F)

Deborah McFee (D)

D: Folade, your name. Why you did you chose it?

F: Umm why did I choose it? (Long pause) It's me...I think. And I chose my name myself –I chose my name even before I went into NJAC⁵ – because I felt with the new consciousness I had, I had to do something about it. I really didn't have an interest in somebody selecting a name for me. There's this process that you went through in selecting your name and... well, essentially claiming your name. So you go through a period of fasting, you do a lot of research to find the names and match your personality, your interests, your life's goal as well with your name because your name really is supposed to represent who you are. You know? Each name has a meaning.

So I went through all that, I selected my name and then I went to Makandal Daaga⁶ and I said these are the names that I'm going with. And he had another view, and I said those are the names I'm going with (joyful laughter). So yes that's how I chose my name and why I chose my name. I always had all intentions of going into NJAC, because of what in my mind NJAC represents. So I just prepared myself and aligned myself with all the things I thought the organization represented. So yes, that's me. And then, I changed my last name when I met Ako Mutota⁷ because he had a stronger last name. Mutota was a stronger name than the name I had before and I said 'okay that's the name I want'.

D: What does Mutota mean?

F: Mutota is a South African name and Mutota was the ruler of southern Africa, so at one time all the countries of South Africa were under the rule of Mutota. Then over time I also came to learn that it also meant – in one of the South African umm dialects – the gatherer. And so that was fitting. Well of course I had

had the name long before so I just said, thought 'okay I think that makes sense' (laughs).

D: Folade, so what- what about your growing up experience made you decide 1) that the NJAC was the trajectory and 2) that this needed to be "honourable" in that way?

F: I'm not sure it has anything to do with my growing up experience (laughs). You know, because my mother, or Mammy, which is my surrogate mother, she felt that you're from Laventille⁸ but you don't have to be of Laventille so she would do everything to kind of steer you away from what she thought Laventille represented. So we don't know anything about going to people house, or liming, or standing up under a standpipe to talk. No no no no no. What I found interesting in my life is that when I became an adult, I tried to just kind of reverse all of the things that she had taught me. You know, so she would, actually ... last week, I was talking to somebody and it came up and I said, but you know we used to come into Port of Spain for recreation. So in the evening, for example, on a hot day like today we come home, she cleans your sneakers and your this and that and the other and umm you do your home lesson, Daddy would take up your home lesson. She would start it, because while she's cleaning your sneakers and uniform and whatever else, you would start your home lesson. Then he would come home and he would finish up your home lesson with you, but she would take you down to window shop, so you're-you're rolling around Port of Spain doing window shopping and thing, you get tired, you come home and you sleep in your bed in the night. And then on Saturday the lime was you go confession in the Catholic Church and then you go in the Savannah or the museum or whatever, so the recreation really was outside. I don't know about and it never occurred to me about my recreation being in Laventille. That wasn't my experience.

So I came to NJAC... so she (her mother) used to be in all the marches, especially funerals. She was in all of that. Umm I came to NJAC... in secondary school I attended South East Port of Spain and there was some problem...now

what was the problem? Something happened in the school and they start to talk about putting us on a shift system with Woodbrook Secondary so I led this demonstration against that. Umm I think you know... this was in 74 or something. Umm and so of course NJAC had already been out there and so on. Makandal Daaga was our neighbour, so when they were having activities you would hear what's going on but I mean we weren't accustomed to going there and so on. I went to those activities even at his home when I became an adult. Umm but I mean the...you know, the-the-the information was around. You know, I was curious about the information, I started reading umm and then in order to get into NJAC in those days you had a year of orientation which required a lot of reading and educational sessions and that sort of thing. There was that whole process of orientation you had to go through before you could join the National Joint Action Committee. I decided that I was ready. I'm not sure I was ready to serve the country; I don't think there was any highfalutin thing in my head. I just felt that there was wrong and that you had to do something to correct the wrong and you play your role.

D: What was the wrong that drove your passion?

F: I think the whole business about the status of African people, you know? You look around and you realise (clears throat) people struggling and you start to realise 'but wait a minute, I come from a place where people always struggling'. But you now learn why people struggle as much as they do here as opposed to someplace else. Umm and-and-and the whole business...there was a lot of violence at that time against the revolutionaries. I don't like violence and I don't like taking advantage of people. THAT!!! I could tell you came from my upbringing (raises voice, then laughs). So yes, I felt obligated really to play a role in strengthening the work of an organisation that was trying to reach the masses and get people more conscious about themselves. Umm because I... you know, it seems to me that if you're comfortable with-with you, you could face the world, you know? One of the great things about NJAC is I look at how, well of course I did that after I joined the organisation. I look at how NJAC would celebrate Indian Independence Day. They would observe Indian Arrival Day

and with the same big, grandiose kind of ceremony that they would have for something like African Liberation Day, you know? And that for me was an indication of a place where justice is practiced, you know? And you could see people and there's no fear of the other. Even to deal with-with white people or any other kind of people. There was no fear of the other.

I think that is one of the things that NJAC taught me and in recent times I've been thinking umm about it more and more because I'm listening to some people talk about 'our people and my people' and-and I'm saying you know...for people who never had to run from police (laughs), this business about coming out here and playing cute. You are talking for people and representing people. You compare that to what people went through to bring this society to a stage where African people could be themselves, hair, clothes, anything. Where you roll in you, going to church, you wearing your clothes (ethnic wear/ African influenced garments), you're going in some formal thing, you going to a concert. You're comfortable to wear your clothes, you know?

And- and Oh God this whole business about this umm what they call it? This natural hair thing that these children carrying on. I'm saying but what is it? What is this? (Laughs) so anyway... but that's just an aside. But yes it is a-a place that you, you don't fear the other. I think that's an important place to be in life.

When I say don't fear the other so that if I have to, if I have to fight for resources to do my work or to meet my needs or whatever, I'm not fighting because the Indian people have. That's not my struggle, that is not my struggle. So I am not afraid then of the UNC?. Which is why NJAC would join with the UNC in government, I'm not afraid. So my language then doesn't have anything to do with 'them people and all of them corrupt' and all of the other things I hear people saying. Umm it's not to say that you don't have some miserable people inside there but the whole business about saying it's we against them, that's not, that's not in my-my frame at all. You know, so I don't have a fear that Indian people go take over and they have so much and they-they...No.

D: That's not the...that's not the nature of your activism?

F: No that's not, and it never has been, and I'm really grateful for that. And for somebody coming from Laventille that could've been a natural fear I would have. We don't know Indian people. We have five Indian families in the whole place and all of them assimilate, I mean come on. Umm so that-that... the....coming from a place like that it's easy then for you to have a fear of the other, right? So I'm always grateful for that orientation in NJAC. I don't walk around with that chip on my shoulder. At all.

D: How has your activism changed over time or has it changed?

F: It has definitely changed. Now I just look on and say 'oh dear'. I just accept that, that is what it is, you know? And just dig deep and come up with a strategy to deal with that situation. Umm, yes, the-the work on...for example you were talking earlier on the work around security. The work around security... part of that had to do with something I had gone through. I began looking at people, especially women and women leaders who really kind of just decimated people's character, mash up your self-esteem. I said, no no no no no no no (shaking head). I'm not doing it and I'm not taking it. I can become very invisible in a flash (snaps fingers). So, we so we had WINAD, and we were focusing on the intergenerational project¹⁰, coming along nicely. But because I'm from Laventille, anything that happens there, even though I don't live there, immediately gets my attention. So, I'm seeing this gun violence unfolding and I'm saying but ey ey, because it's we nobody ain't taking on this.

D: In what time? I think it's important that you establish the timeline.

F: Oh the timeline? That was 2000.

D: Around 2000.

F: That was 2000. Umm so then I just kind of started talking with people. Even before that, in '99 I invited a group of women who I'd met along my life's path to sit and discuss a concern I had around succession planning in the women's movement and consciousness raising and sort of maintaining a momentum. I have found that over time (sighs) revolutionaries hold on to their revolutionary position and can't speak about anything else, even the language we use, ...you know? And so, you hold your position and then somebody else holds their position which may be opposing or certainly not supportive of your position and so, you are always battling from your corner kind of thing.

I had a concern that we had made a lot of progress but somehow that consciousness, to really kind of stand up for each other, to oppose injustice and so on, it started to slide a little bit. Slide in the sense that people were not as militant. Oh and you asked how my activism has changed? I'm not as militant as I used to be. So we were, we were not as militant and because we're not as militant, a lot of new influences then, started to creep into the work around building consciousness and raising awareness about the injustice that particularly African people experience in this society.

And I'm saying 'but you know we have a lot of young women who are coming up and like they're just rolling around, no sense of direction, nothing at all. What would happen if we were to invest in them by raising their social consciousness? Training them up, exposing them to women who have already demonstrated in their own life's work, a commitment to social justice principles and so on. So that these girls– they're learning, they're growing, but they're also realizing that they have a network of women, who will become their support network infinitely. So you're never alone.'

I believe it's really important for people to know—especially girls—to know that they're never alone. There's this thing I-I say with my family, all of them. I say 'it's you and me against the world you know'. And so, to Chelsea (her granddaughter), Chelsea would say 'Aunty Folade you does tell everybody that!' I say 'well I'm telling you. It's you and me against the world.' Because that

really is my philosophy in life. It's you and me against the world. You must always know that you are not alone. No matter who you have in your life, when you're going down that road you know for sure you have to look back for me, I'm there, you know? So yes, that is important to me, so I thought it would be good if we were to invest in them and look at where their life takes them in ten years. It was intergenerational, we paired them with a-a big sister. But then it's-it's-it's really a kind of intense engagement that we're doing with them because even if it's not a workshop this week or this month, you're in touch with them by phone, somebody taking them out, somebody sharing something and so on and so forth. So my thing was 'let me invest in them little young girl and see if we could have a little difference' because the people I was seeing leading the women's movement are all mad.

So my thing was become invisible to that lot and build and grow a new pool, you know? And you grow a new pool by investing in it and giving it sometime to-to-to flourish. So we started...so I-I called together these women and ...

D: This was in 2000?

F: This was in 1999, November 24th 1999 because I wanted to do it in observance of November 25th so it was November 24th.

And so I said to them 'this is what I'm thinking, this is what I'd like to do. What do people think? Do people think it's useful and so on?' They said 'yes,' but of course it was just one meeting and everybody went back in their corner ... but I needed to test what I was thinking on people and if it was going to fly with these women who I'd known for a long time and sort of engaged with in different ways over time and who would come up with different experiences. So, I went about handpicking those women because I wanted different voices at the table so that at least when I'm finished with that meeting I have a sense of whether this is a good idea or not so it's not just let's say, some NGO person or something like that. I wanted to have that mix so we got that. And Sattie Narace for example was one of the people who I invited. We weren't friends at

the time, but I had done some work with her and I was impressed with her. Her honest kind of self-presentation.

D: Refreshingly disarming (laughs)?

F: Refreshingly disarming. So, I invited Sattie who turned around and became a founder of WINAD. Jillian, who was a young, young, young woman. She would have been like very early twenties. I'd met Jillian in a...something the network had done, and looked at how perplexed she was in that environment and I said 'let me take this girl'. So, I invited her, she became a founder. So, the three of us were the founders of WINAD. And then yes, my liming¹¹ partners from Sangre Grande, their perspective was the social dimension. It was that kind of mix, so yes. By 2000, I was seeing this thing happening in Laventille and I said 'oh dear'. So I brought it to the attention of people again and we went and we started talking to people. You talk to NGO people and they say 'well we don't really...'

D: And what year you started talking to...? 2000 and what is this thing? Tell me, give me something.

F: The gun violence.

D: The gun violence.

F: The gun violence. People started to get killed. You saw where there were more homicides using guns, right? I started to look also globally to see what was happening, to try and understand what is this trend that I'm seeing coming because my thing was what I see coming going to run-over everybody. So if you're talking to NGO people and they would say 'well we're not working with this, our thing is HIV or whatever'. My point was, no matter what we working on, what's coming here is going to affect that. Because at the end of the day, you would not have been able to go into any community to do any work if people shooting down the place (laughs). I mean bullet ain't have eyes.

So anyway, we went to the police, Guy¹², Guy was the commissioner at the time. Yes, Guy was the commissioner at the time. Before that I had dealt with Jules Bernard... Jules Bernard¹³, he wasn't the-the gun thing, I don't remember what it was but Guy, he was the person. So Guy just wouldn't move on it, he didn't see...as a matter of fact he said to me 'but Folade, what allyuh doing in this kind of...what allyuh¹⁴ doing in this kind of work? I expect allyuh to be working on umm drug rehabilitation and thing, allyuh is women.'

D: Folade why did you think a women's organisation had the right in that policy space?

F: Of course. I don't see hard and soft issues. I really don't. No, I know at a personal level. I mean I know you could go on a, on a podium and make a presentation and say that. I simply don't see hard and soft issues. I do not see hard and soft issues. Umm I don't think I ever have. I-I-I don't think I ever have. What I, what I believe is, there's a need, and a need needs a response. So I remember when I was in secondary school I refused to do some subjects. It used to be in those days, typing, shorthand and something else and I absolutely refused to do, to choose those subjects.

D: Office procedures?

F: Something so, that mix up. We used to do shorthand in my days right. It was shorthand, it was typing, now I learnt to type because typing is good for me. But I said I'm not doing those because I'm not prepared to make coffee for anybody. Because I grew up in a particular way.

F: Of course, at-at that time it-it did not register to me why I saw life in that way but later in life as an adult I realised that ...Oh, when it hit me was after Mutota had said to me that we are in a relationship and I don't come to his house to wash his clothes and everybody's talking about it. I was in shock because I had never washed anybody's clothes. My sister and I used to get our allowance from Daddy every Friday when he came home. He came, he would bring chicken

from Honeycomb, he would bring something from Coelho, he would bring a flask for him and Mammy to drink, something for me and right. If you wash a handkerchief, if you said, 'Daddy let me wash your handkerchief for you and your pair of socks'. He would pay us, you getting extra money for that. My mother never (laughs) let me wash my daddy underwear and his shirt and vest and all these kind of thing. So this business about washing clothes for men, it never occurred to me that you do. Now she did it. Of course she's washing for everybody, but in my head I'm not associating myself with that because she's washing for me and she's washing for everybody else and she never one day said well you know...what what what. If you wash daddy socks and a kerchief you know it's a little extra thing you getting and that was a joke and you know?

F: Yes. So yes so I say 'but (laughs) but if you have people who does wash your clothes, if you have people who does wash your clothes I don't understand why anybody would be talking about me?' You know, and poor fella...so we had to...but he was so perplexed and you know, like I'm seeing it in his face like this pain (laughs) about 'why do you not understand this?' (Laughs)

D: But Folade is it that...what comes to mind is an un-titled feminist sensibility?

F: Girl I don't know what it was you know.

D: Do you think, do you think that was a product of what your mother was doing and what your father was...

F: I am a product of that. My mother, I remember daddy always used to say to her 'But you don't teach these girls to do anything for themselves. How they going to make it in the world?' She ain't business, she ain't business. I don't know about this business about you clean house. So you had this drill on Saturday mornings, you went to market, you come back, she was the one to clean the fish, clean the provisions, clean the da da da, da da da (counting on her fingers). You might shine some furniture, or something like that, that's the end of your story right there. But I don't know anything about taking care of a man.

When I say, I mean so, alright so Daddy, okay I'll give you an example. A chicken has two legs. So, if Daddy gets a leg, Folade gets a leg. There was nothing in that household that says 'he name man and he has to get...' I don't know what's the best parts- the leg, the breast, the this, the that and the other. No. The chicken cut up in parts, there were four people to eat, and it went down like that. And so umm yes umm the business about wait until your father come for correction and-and all this kind of thing. You know when that started happen? When we became teenagers.

So, my Daddy is a good soul, he used to take real good care of me, you can't hope to have a more loving man in your corner than he and he doing everything for you. So there was nothing inside there that says that women are supposed to do this and...when Mammy gone to play mas or she gone to work in white people kitchen, he combing our hair for us to go to church. And on Carnival Tuesday she get up early, cook the food leave it there, he pack it in the bag and take Grace and I down the road. Gone and sit down by the savannah and when she coming across the stage with the band she come and eat and she gone.

D: Coming from gender relations 101?

F: Gender, what are your gender...what you call them? Gender moments? (Laughs)

D: (Laughs) Gender uh huh moments.

D: Folade listen (laughs) this issue is about gender and policy so I need to get there quickly. So you started, you spoke a little bit about the security work around WINAD. You've been around the women's movement and other activisms regionally for a long time. Umm tell me about the idea. How do you, how do you...how do you get into these spaces? The policy spaces? I've listened to you talk about Guy and I've listened to you talk about Jules Bernard.

I've seen you negotiate these spaces. What is the...1) tell me how do you get into these spaces and what is the relevance of it to your activism?

F: I have a strategic mind. I don't have a quick thinking mind but I have a strategic mind. And I always believe that a problem has a solution, so my work is to find the solution. Ain't no point complaining, so my work is to find the solution. When my son behaving bad I does say 'okay let me find a solution'. So I always feel very proud of myself for the relationship I've been able to develop with the police. Simply because of my NJAC experience. In the days when I served in NJAC it was not pleasant. So the business about calling Guy at the office and asking to meet for an appointment, tracking him, tracking him, tracking him until I get the appointment, it's not something that I would've done in my earlier period of activism. One of the things that I feel confidently proud of internally is-is the relationship with the police that I'm able really to sit down across a table with a police officer and have a discussion. I mean, you know I remember a discussion umm during the same work meeting with some of the-the former Burroughs¹⁵ Flying Squad people and having to deal with them and I'm sitting there thinking 'wow life has changed'.

D: During the first...the umm...

F: WINAD's work on security? Yes Craig and all of them were umm Flying Squad people.

D: Tell me about the Flying Squad people when NJAC...

F: Well umm Randolph Burroughs had this side called the flying squad and they were...that was the unit really...like now you have IATF¹⁶ and that's the kind of crack-shot...so that was the unit that really targeted NJAC people. Umm and it was serious, serious conflict, serious serious conflict, you know? Umm so yes I guess we all get old and mature and we can be civil. So-so yes I'm saying that I have a-a very strategic mind and when I realised that I was knocking at doors... because I really didn't have an interest in working on security because I had

had enough security in my life already. Umm and the whole business about having to deal with guns and no, that was not an interest I had. I had done my duty where that was concerned. But, in speaking with people I realized that people weren't shifting and the police was just kind of being the police. I said 'let me find some support for this work to help us financially but also technically to better understand this issue and to deal with it because there is nothing you could do about it, it's coming. I feel deeply up till today that 1990¹⁷ really made a significant negative contribution to the level of firearm violence that we are experiencing within the society. I'm really really opposed to it and so I felt that we had found ourselves in a situation where we had to respond because there's nothing you can do about it, that's where you are. And as a society, if you put on your blinders it will just get worse and then you're going to be defenseless.

Anyway, so I started looking around and just kind of started connecting globally and that's how I connected with IANSA¹⁸ and just kind of asking people to come in and help us. In 2002 we held the first workshop that we ever had which we brought together people from the security sector, along with civil society, the social sector, and the government social sector. The only security agency that didn't turn up was the Trinidad & Tobago Police Service (TTPS). So I said 'well I'm going to have another one and they will have to be there.' Well that's the other thing about me as well, like I said, I would think strategically and so when I line up my blocks I line up my blocks. And I'm going after, after it. So we started working. Trevor Paul was the, was the Deputy... he was the Deputy Commissioner or something and I'd known Trevor Paul before. So I started working on him because I just thought 'well okay Guy is not the police. He could be the Commissioner but he's not the only police.' You need to find somebody who can get you inside there so when you talk about how do you enter these policy spaces? You need to identify who are the key people. Who could be your drivers within an organization to get things moving? And I have a very simple formula. I identify a champion, it's-it's a strategic approach that those gurus say you should use and I find it works well and it worked well for us with the ATT. I went...I identify a champion and I identify a driver or drivers. I don't ever rely on one person. And then you start working it.

D: Folade, how do you sell this whole idea of women, guns, and public policy?

F: Don't say anything about women, present yourself. We went through that whole ATT campaign and up to now I have not stood up and tell them 'you see this is a women's organization.' They just felt it. Everybody who interfaced with us in that campaign interfaced with WINAD. No matter how you tell them CDRAV¹⁹, they interfaced with WINAD. Present yourself. You've got to know your work and do your work. There are different ways in which you fight. I always say I believe in nonviolence. But there's always a space for a battle and you must always claim the right to take that space when it becomes necessary. So you present yourself and you present yourself with facts. And people talk a lot about passion and passion and passion. I like facts and I like boldness. 'Here I am. I'm not going away.'

D: Folade, over time in your work...so you talk about that with the ATT, tell me, has there been a change in how you approach policy? Tell me how you would have dealt with policy before?

F: Before, the way I would've dealt with policy is protesting. You hit the streets, which I still believe in, you hit the streets. I guess now we have social media and so you just hit the streets a little bit differently, but I believe even in the era of social media it is still important to walk, to demonstrate. I believe there is spirituality with walking, having your feet on the pitch, on the grass or wherever it is. Bringing your personhood to the life of the earth, saying, speaking what you want and putting it into the universe, that kind of thing. I believe in that, but like I said now you can do things. You can use different approaches or albeit you use them simultaneously as we did in the-the child marriage campaign²⁰.

So my activism in the past really was protest demonstration. I'm not a letter to the editor kind of person. I would do a news release and I would hit the mass media, do interviews and that kind of thing. I'm not a call-in person either on the electronic media. My activism has changed because I have, I think I have....

Now, I rely more on research to sell the ideas which is why you'll find I'll want us to do this paper and this paper, no matter what work I do. One of the things I've found over time, is that you can do a lot of work in communities. Not even in communities, as a national NGO you can, you can do a lot of work, whatever your workshop, your conference, your whatever. But if somebody isn't capturing that work and writing it up, then, the shelf life is not as long unless you write it and then you could circulate it and people could refer to it and so on. Also writing allows you to track the changes you've been through. So a paper that you wrote ten years ago you go back and say 'ey you know I went and make that point but look the language could've been so much more delicate.' You know, that sort of thing? So I've gotten a, a greater appreciation for that approach. I think that marriage is a more successful approach to use.

D: Marriage between...?

F: So my formula is...never move from the ground. I will always find a reason to go into a community. Even if I'm not doing a project I will attend something that you're having because for me, I think it's important when you see people interacting with each other or even interacting with a football, there's, people's personalities come out in different ways so it's important for you to be there to be able to gain that. Separate and apart from the fact that really you just kind of want to be among those people, you know? So I think that, that mix of doing your work in the community, the research that gives you the papers that allows you to enter another space as well. And then getting to leaders and-and-and key stakeholders to have discussions with them about what you're seeing, what you want to get done? How it can mesh with what they're interested in or not? Also, to learn from them. So I think it's a, it's a...that coming together of different kinds of approaches is what I tend to go with now. Umm but I'm not sure that it's so much different. I think out-outside of the writing, it's pretty much the same approach.

F: People centered.

D: I've seen you do it. There's a way in which you negotiate scholarship, activism... I've seen you do the public policy and you negotiate those spheres very... in a very productive way and so what I really want to ask you is- are there moments of conflicts as you try, as you negotiate these spaces?

F: Not as yet, not as yet. I'll tell you why I say that. Because I see them all as equally important. None-none-none is weighted more for me than the other and I think that is what works for me. I don't weight any more than the other. And I'm, I'm also very comfortable in all of those spheres. I think my area of greatest weakness would be in the writing part of, but in terms of work in community or with communities of practice and policy people yes. Why it hasn't become problematic as yet, or has conflict as yet, is because I tend to build relationships. So when you talk about how do you enter these spaces, I build relationships with people.

So like I said I identify the champion and I identify my drivers but I'm building relationships with these people as well, because as far as I'm concerned everybody needs to walk away with something. Ain't no point fooling your facts around that. Everybody needs to walk away with something. Your something might be different to my something. Everybody needs to walk away with something and they should have the right to walk away with something. So what I try to do is to determine what is the "something" that is important to this person. Some people you never get it right, some people take longer than others. Some people it's...you know. So I build relationships about how we would work together and because I would build those relationships I'm in a position to say to you 'I'm comfortable with this, I'm not comfortable with that.' That whole ATT thing was successful because I built a relationship with Eden Charles²¹.

D: With whom?

F: Eden Charles. And because I built that relationship he knew what would fly with me and what would not. And then for us too there was, he had an interest

in NJAC as well. He had, he had been around and-and that sort of thing. So there were some things that you could speak about.

D: Tell me... now I will, I will describe the ATT process in a WINAD context as the crystallizing of human security concerns in Trinidad and Tobago as it relates to gun violence fitted into a global governance structure. And that is international public policy.

D: Talk to me a little bit about the genesis of that for you, that ATT process. What made it easy for you all to...what made it accessible? Because you all were impacting international public policy. What made this accessible?

F: Boldface behaviour (laugh).

Because the ATT was not government or NGOs...our NGO partners the big organizations did not see CARICOM as a player in that ATT.

D: Who were the big organizations?

F: Big organizations would've been the Oxfam, the Amnesty International, the IANSA. Those were the three parties really.

D: Date this work for me.

F: That umm that would have been... so before ATT... there was a lot of work...so ATT was over ten years. There was a lot of work before. The ATT was a build-up from discussions around controlling umm conventional arms within your borders and so on, building in more robust processes to monitor and that kind of thing and then it-it evolved in layers, because global civil society started to push for... So some countries had good, strong measures in place and some didn't. Oscar Arias who used to be the president of umm Costa Rica for example, was arguing that you need everybody to have strong mechanisms in place. It ain't make sense you have and I don't have. The thing is going to fall down and.... he pulled together I think it was 20 Nobel Laureates plus himself and they started to

lobby governments to bring a discussion to the fore at the UN around how do you control the trade in arms.

D: This was when?

F: So that would've been happening in the early 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003 kind of thing. Now we got involved with IANSA in 2001 I think. Umm and there was this-man... So up to this day I always tell people I don't ever want to go to a meeting without having a plan of what I'm walking away with. So every time they invite me to a meeting I will go to the meeting with a plan for how we could get support for our work down here and get resources to do the work. So IANSA used to...we had the UN Programme of Action that came in 2001 and so every two years there was this meeting and I looked at that and I said 'that's a very important place for us to be'. And Trinidad and Tobago rolling out and coming and sitting down in the people place and ain't saying nothing. So I say well no, this can't happen. So I started working now on the government here, Foreign Affairs, Ministry of National Security and then working on NGO partners globally saying 'I want greater visibility for what's happening in the Caribbean because I see people dying, it changing up things and so on and so forth.

So IANSA used to be in charge of bringing NGOs and so my thing was I needed to get more of our people here, engaged in this conversation because I mean even us in WINAD... people weren't talking about it. When we, you know if we're going by the police and if we're doing something people would come on board but in terms of... it-it was a scary thing eh. This business of going up against them fellas with guns and so on. That was a scary thing so people weren't really too enthused. So I said to IANSA, the money you're going to spend on me to put me up in a hotel, give me that money and I will bring myself and somebody else on this money so that I expose more people to these meetings. And because all of us have family in Brooklyn we could sleep by them and we could come to meetings and so on. So each time I would bring somebody, so that more people would be exposed, because when you go into the UN and you see and you meet people and so and so. So that was my

strategy for really widening the pool of resource people that we would have. Then I was invited to sit on this International Steering Committee that was looking at this question of conventional arms controlling the thing. When I looked at the line up for this thing and I listened to them I say well 'we not inside here.' I said to them 'here's what, this is important for CARICOM. We know that we don't produce and we don't buy plenty, that's okay. But we are seeing the effects of it and therefore we have to be equal partners around the table.' So I went through that struggle to try to get NGOs to see us in this region as people who qualify to be around the table. So I did that and having done that, then I started to work on the governments. And, in working with the governments, you know CARICOM governments don't have a history of working with civil society in a respectful way.

D: Do you think that is one of our major public policy issues?

F: They're damn disrespectful bad bad bad bad. So I looked and I said 'well something had to happen here because I'm not letting this go.' So then I had to roll back and decide how I had to deal with them and I said 'I'm from Trinidad and Tobago. Trinidad and Tobago holds the responsibility for crime and security in CARICOM. Trinidad and Tobago has to be the champion in this. And I started working Eden Charles and up to now he will tell people how I used to run him down all over.

D: What was his position at that time?

F: He was a-a-a... I don't even think he was a Deputy Head of Mission or anything at the time, he was one of the officers.

D: One of the Foreign Service officers.

F: It is through our work that he got that ambassador thing you know. Yes, yes, yes, I started to work him, because I'd met others, but I looked at him and I said 'this boy has some potential here, I'm moving with him,' and I started to work

him. Nights... I mean 2 o'clock in the morning, 12 o'clock in the night I'm on the computer writing statements for Eden to make and all kind of thing, send it across to him. He would work out how he wanted to present it and we started hitting the ground. Because I went and I sat down with him and I said 'here's what. We outside the loop here and we can't afford to be. So we have to do this.' He say 'alright'. He came on board and that was it. He was my driver inside there and then I brought in Ken Epps. Even before that time I brought in Ken Epps and the Brazilians and different people and got them on the TV, to the ministry thing thing thing thing thing. A lot of time saying to people 'this is what happening in other places, this is what can be done. This is an NGO willing to work with you.' We got plenty "steups"²² and that's alright. But I think one of the things I've learnt—with this work— is that when, not always, but I find far more often than not, when people realise that you're committed to going the distance, whatever it is that you're trying to sell them...

D: Folade you have...so tell me how have you seen the policy space change or has it changed? Because you are coming from a...

F: I can speak specifically around security because...

D: Around security yes because you're talking about... which is such a masculinist space also.

F: It's a masculinist space and needless to say of course they've told us that... I told you Guy tell me 'but what are you doing in this?' Umm...

D: But you're beating down this door. Tell me...

F: But yes yes.... Well you see I don't know where Guy. No, I think he's from, he was from where? Toco? Or some place there? Anyway, I know he wasn't from Laventille and my interest was in saving Laventille people so there was nothing to stop me from doing what I had to do. So I take that I roll with it, I get some money for a meeting and I call him. He said 'well Folade if you have the

money'.... I can't say the man ever bawl at me or disrespectful. You know, it's that kind of subtle, dismissive, disrespectful kind of thing. I say 'that ain't nothing, I-I walking with that.' And I call him, I say 'I have this money, I want to do this.' He say 'well if you have the money, why are you bothering me, I ain't bound to come.' I say 'alright.' I gone by Trevor Paul. I say 'Trevor, send somebody to the meeting for me.' He send Oswyn Allard and that was it with me and the TTPS there you know. Jillian (laughs), Jillian use to be on Oswyn Allard case. That was it you know. Oswyn come in the meeting and he said 'well ey I ain't realise is that allyuh talking about all the time.' From there he became our driver inside the TTPS.

D: Oswyn Allard?

F: Yes.

D: What was different about his context?

F: Allard? He was a bad police. (Laughs) he was a bad police²³. He came in and we went to work and he saw, he realised that it's not...you know a lot of times especially public officers they have this thing about whether you're trying to set them up and that kind of thing? He realised well ey ey it's not that. And then of course being a bad police he looked and he saw it's a bunch of women, I could manage them. You know, so that worked very well for us (laughs).

D: WINAD's work has an interesting relationship with feminisms. You talk about not necessarily having to say that you are feminists, but it is in how you present yourself? (Actual question not clear here)

F: You present yourself.

D: And-and being a woman in a space around security.

F: And you ain't seeing no men on the team.

D: How do you... because I mean it is...how are you managing this thing? The whole idea of managing femininity in this masculinist space?

F: I don't know. For me it was... I was driven to do it and I wasn't prepared really to let any hangups that they may have, that may make them think that as a woman you can't do this or the other... it couldn't stop me because what had to be done really was more important than me having to tell you 'be careful how you're talking to me, you know.' I didn't need to tell you that because if I turn up at your door as a woman to tell you I come to talk about guns and I had a meeting with them gangsters in wherever and this is the outcome of the meeting and this is what we want to do, There's nothing else for me to say after that. You understand and should be sufficiently sensible to understand that you're dealing with somebody who really don't have any qualms with calling you out if you do foolishness.

So for me it was a kind of fearless mission because I felt deeply that the work had to be done and that I could do it. And then that was the other thing. Although I came to the issue quite reluctantly, when I looked left and right I realized, but nobody is running with this. I just decide I was going to do it. And anybody who knows me will tell you if I make up my mind I'm going and do that, then I'm going and do that. So, by the time I go to present myself to Martin Joseph²⁴... Martin Joseph was a good example. I gone by Martin Joseph. Martin Joseph said to me 'Folade, let me tell you something.' Now this is after I'm going on and on to meet with him eh? He dodge, he weave, he dee dee dee dee. Let me tell you something. 'You see them thing you talking about, that is not for me. You talked to Hazel Manning as yet? That's who you need to talk to.' I think she was in... that's when they made her a minister.

D: Education.

F: Something so. He say, 'I understand what you're saying. I understand all that you saying but I come in here to deal with a problem that we have' and that was in 2004 when we were having a lot of killings.

D: That was one of the high point years. 2004 was when we reached 400.

F: That's right, that's right.

And he said 'you see that situation? That is what I came here to do. I cannot deal with what you're talking about. What you're talking about is necessary, it has to be done but I'm telling you I'm not the one to deal with that now.

D: What was the difference? What was so... because I-I'm thinking...WINAD is dealing with gun violence, Martin Joseph is the Minister of National Security, he is dealing with the impact of gun violence. Why is it represented so differently from one...in one space than the other?

F: Because WINAD is saying to Martin Joseph 'you're holding on to this position of more gun, more this, more that'. And we're saying to you 'if you don't see the people who causing this violence in some kind of way, you ain't go done buy gun.²⁵ So his point was 'I understand that. I know that's the direction that I have to take at some point but not at this point.' At this point, it's fire against...fire and fire, you know? But because we went with a package, that we left with him, under a month after that meeting Jillian calls me up to say 'you hear Martin Joseph?'

D: What was in the package?

F: The package was materials on gun violence, not only here but how it's playing out in other places and some of the initiatives people had used and so on and Martin Joseph was on the people media talking and using the material that we gave him. At that moment, I realized we had turned the corner because although Commissioner Guy would've said to me 'well Folade why you ain't thing?' He wasn't my hardest nut to crack. My hardest nut to crack was

Martin Joseph. Anthony Roberts was the Minister in the ministry but he was under Martin Joseph at the time.

(Laughs) I remember a time we went to a meeting and Anthony Joseph say 'yes we supporting WINAD.' Jillian –she have no cap for she mouth eh–'she said, supporting WINAD? Where's the cheque?' (Laughs)

F: She was young, she was young, she was twenty-something.

D: It's still a relevant question, it's still a relevant question! (NGO work needs monetary support, not to be coopted by the government. In small economies, with narrow resource bases, that support is necessary).

F: She real matter of fact. Mmhmm, where the cheque? Umm and Martin Joseph gave us money. He gave us money for a regional meeting we were hosting at the time. His Deputy PS²⁶ at the time was Boucaud-Blake. I remember, because at that time, of course he couldn't come. I remember she called us and apologized because she couldn't come either. But the Ministry, They gave us money for the meeting.

It was a turning point though. When Jillian called me and told me look at his statement. He made a public statement on the gun violence in the country and used some of the language WINAD had provided for him, language that reframed the issue. That, his statement had that information in it, and I went after and saw the statement, that was the turning point in terms of how WINAD's work was looked at by the state.

D: That was around 2004?

F: That was around 2004. It could be 2003, 2004. But wait they came in what, in 2002?

D: I can't remember.

F: Yes because Manning²⁷ ran 2002 to 2007 so it would've been like 2003 because we had the meeting with Bill²⁸ and then in 2004 and I think it...I think we met...I met with him before that. The meeting²⁹ with Bill and then was 2004.

D: I want to...I want to talk about... No I wouldn't talk about that meeting (the 2004 meeting with the community leaders). I just think it is just, it was huge.

D: I'm listening to you.. Folade what I find very interesting about WINAD's work is that what it really does, it-it really disrupts this whole idea of feminist work. Regionally I think we have an idea around women's work, violence against women in very narrow silos. I always find WINAD's work to be a disruption.

F: It's intended to be.

D: Tell me about that.

F: It's-it's intended to be. Umm, it's intended to challenge a number of the notions, some of which you just, you just referred to there. I think to some extent we've become...those of us who do women's work and gender work. We've become complicit in women's oppression.

D: What you mean?

F: Umm we-we we don't seem to believe or perhaps it's unfair to say believe but believe sufficiently in people's right to the things we talk about. Your right umm to have your rights respected and that kind of thing. And so, we seem to have gotten comfortable that...there are women who will get licked and then, there's the rest of us. And given that I don't believe that women should get licked, then I'm on a constant mission really to dismantle anything that contributes to women getting licked. And I find that more and more we've become too taken up with you know, presentations and... those things are important but somehow we've kind of categorised people. So that I listen to how we talk about umm

domestic violence and the language we use about it if she...if what-what? If you could become economically, financially independent then you could walk away and I'm saying 'but you have to be talking about only one class of women?' So is that in your...in our thinking we've decided it's one class of women who gets hit? Because we know then that it's not and if your argument is that... if you get employment or if you become more financially stable you can walk away, it seems to me that that discounts our whole argument about why violence against women is wrong and why-why it happens and why it's wrong. That troubles me.

D: Do you think we are ready? Do you think activism, whether it's feminist activism, women or whatever. Do you think it's ready –our regional headspace that is–do you think we're ready to have a conversation about the fact that people just want relationship? Because it's easy...to-to me...

F: People who stay in abusive relationships?

D: It has very little to do with class, the economics of the situation. And it's something that I'm working through in my head ... I call it legislating love as it...Are we ready to have that love conversation? Because it would then take us to the fact that not only men beat, not only, not only heterosexual relationships engage in- levels of violence. It takes us into different spaces. It takes us beyond the economics. Do you think we're ready to have that conversation?

F: I think we've backed ourselves in a corner. I'll tell you what I mean. You know earlier on I talked about how revolutionaries, we have our position, we have our language, we have our beliefs and we-we hold on to our position and we there, in we corner and... I think that feminist activism and generally women's work in this region umm has-has...I don't know if it's..Nelcia³⁰ would say lazy, but we've stopped, we've stopped allowing ourselves to think about solutions. We do not allow ourselves to think sufficiently deeply about people's reality. Which brings me to my class, my class theory.

I think that it's become... The-the people who...the thought leaders and the people who lead generally in this society and this civil society space in this region –not only in women's work– have-have-have sort of carved out a space where they operate from that is separate and apart from everybody else. And they've lumped women who they think are in need of their activism into a class of people who are almost incapable of doing anything on their own. And I think that when-when that happens.... The-the-the business about having conversations around what these people may be saying becomes very difficult because you cannot hear it. Not only do you not want to, you simply cannot because you've already developed this matrix that says this is what this is. This is the behaviour. You need financial support, you need counselling...counselling...this counselling thing is another thing I think people start to get in real trouble for. So you need financial resources, you need counselling, you need a space to go, you need, you need, you need.

When we went to Biche³¹ for the last Women's Conversation this woman came and she said 'but why it is as soon as I come and say that my husband beating me, they does tell me to leave? I don't want to leave, I just want him to stop beating me. I just want him to stop beating me. I have my children and....' She went on and on and on and I rock back and I say 'but what the jail is this?' Listen to how this girl very clear about what she needs and why it is that she really don't want anybody to tell her about leaving the man. She has an investment there and the same way that you have an investment in your relationship–It may look different–but she has an investment there. And if the first thing is that she leaves and then you start to talk about if she leave she ain't have this, that and the other, but you're not offering anything.

D: So, tell me, tell me how you think we could have a conversation with feminist activism and public policy that actually engages in that type of analysis?

F: No. Because you cannot do an analysis of people's reality without them being in the room and if we're going to have a feminist discourse on policy and this,

that and the other, that woman in Biche ain't going to turn up. She's not going to turn up. Well first of all she wouldn't be invited (laughs).

D: (Laughs) that's what I'm thinking.

F: You know? And-and that's what I think we really need to do some-some-some analysis of...and I'm not sure how it can be done because-because we've all become so bright and we know it and we've done it and we have all these cases that we could show we've done it, perhaps we don't listen to people. Which is why things like the Women's Conversation are so important and why you kind of need to just go and throw yourself on a bench in Laventille and sit down and drink a beer with people and just hear how them women does live their life.

D: Tell me about that.

F: I keep saying, people do not wait on you to come to save them and I think that's where NGO work has gone to. We see ourselves as helping people so we know it, we could get the resources, we could come and do this and that and the other. Ain't nobody sitting down there waiting on you. When you come, you come to add value, they always have a plan. Even if it's she is in the middle of the river and look left and right she doesn't have a boat to come out of the that-that engulf with water, she has a plan. By the time you reach it's to add value.

D: Tell me about the conversations. Tell me about the Women's Conversations, the idea of it and looking at...

F: It ain't have no Maths in that. People must talk for themselves. And those of us that are out here and we say that we are academics and professionals and this, that and the other, we damn disrespectful and that has got to cease. People must speak for themselves because they can. And we have to encourage structured engagement so that they're not only speaking to us who come in as

researchers or as activists but they're also speaking to the people who make decisions on their life. That's why I invite the Prime Minister to come by we place you know. I say 'we ain't coming by he. Let him come by we. If you have to sweat, sweat. If you have to sit down on top one another, sit down on top one another. Come to the masses where they are.' And we have to encourage that. We have to encourage... I want to see, I'm working on this project now. I want to see this government or whatever government we have...by 2020 for us to have policy on participation in this country. We do not have a policy on participation, we need a policy on participation. You see this jokey business people going around all over the place, sit down on two armchair and say they're having a conversation? That's just not on, it is not on. There has to be structured engagement between leaders and the people who does ask them to lead them. And that has to be somewhere entrenched in and written down and actioned every quarter, every month, every whatever it is you choose to do. There has to be a policy on participation that brings people closer to whether it's their MP or the-the-the Commissioner or the police, the-the Police Complaints, whoever. These people who have office that are serving us, there has to be a formalized process of engagement that doesn't allow them to come and say 'we take six guns off the road, off the street. Be happy.' No no no, that's insufficient, that's woefully inadequate. We have to work towards that. I have, I want to see that done by 2020 in this country. You have the-the policy. Of course we'll have to work and cuss and get on and all kind of thing to make sure that they action the policy but it has to be in this country.

D: What you want to change? What is the aspect of policy making that you want to change to with this...

F: It has to be more inclusive. It has to be a respectful engagement. You'll find I use that word all the time. There has to be respectful engagement with the people of this country. And we have to do it in such a way that over time people learn how it can be done. So right now the way it's done is that so they having a thing down the road and I'm going and I'll get up and I'll get on and who could talk the longest and the thing thing thing thing thing. Everybody go

off equally unhappy. But I'm saying that it can be done differently. Umm it can be done in such a way that people can be... can prepare themselves in clusters before they come into the big meeting. So that we all walk away really with some agreement as to what-what we're going to do. And the recommendations that government for example, as an example, the recommendations that the government gets from the masses, that if we meet now we have to have an agreement that we meet in a month or three months, for you to come back and tell me what you can and cannot do and why you can and cannot do these things. Because that kind of engagement also forces me to prepare myself to come and engage with you, you know. So everybody really, preparing to engage in a governance process that respects their point of view and that brings some tangible benefits. You can't continue spending money on these kinds of things that we do.

So in terms of for me what I-I want to see in policy is content and process, those would be the two elements that I am interested in. Content and process. The content is usually not sufficiently sort of all-encompassing of the different needs. And even when we have policy that addresses to the needs of-of working class people, it is done in such a welfare mode that it's not particularly helpful so I think policy should have a more development mode. There is a space for welfare but umm it can't be that the welfare increases the expenditure in the budget every year and you're happy to say that you're spending more on URP³² or you're spending more on-on CEPEP³³. Umm because in doing that you're not... what you do is that when you get into a bind, that's the first thing that you cut.

D: Folade we have spoken about many things- security...and one of the...we've spoken about women. Tell me about the...the idea of rights, you always talk about human rights. What about sexual minorities in the Caribbean. How can we advance that conversation?

F: Who are sexual minorities in this Caribbean? Who, who you talking about? Allyuh put allyuh head outside there (laughs). Put allyuh head on chopping block. Sexual minorities you say? (Laughs)

D: Sexual minorities in the Caribbean.

F: This Caribbean is a complex place you know.

D: Quite.

F: This place very complex with plenty plenty secret. Nuff nuff nuff nuff nuff. (Laughs) I don't know what sexual minorities allyuh talking about (laughs). But I think, if you know, if you were to talk about sexual minorities how do you advance that? Those people who believe that they're not in that sector of people need to stand with them and stand for them. Any room that you are in, if they're not there for themselves you have to bring that to the table as well, you know?

D: Do you think it should be part of the feminist agenda?

F: I imagine it is because I mean people speak all the time and-and do all kinds of things, I think it is. Umm what I think that we need to pay attention to how we present these positions to people and I'll tell you what I mean. So gay and lesbian people, the-the-the whole spectrum in my opinion have an equal wining space. You know, I don't you know, that-that's just what it is. It's not something that I would...it-it's not a discussion I-I would have with people about whether they should be or should not be. I find that's a-a nonsense discussion. However, one of the things I've been looking at and I find that it's something that comes out when you listen to the US whatever that is going on there. I don't know that we are particularly sensitive or sensible about the extent of discomfort that some people feel around this issue. It's all well and good to say they have to get on board because people here and whatever else we say but I think that we need to pay attention to the-the-the high level of discomfort that some people have

in just engaging with this discussion and dealing with these fellow human beings and so on. Umm because I think that you always have to take into account where people coming from so although you would see it as...And I'm not, I'm not suggesting that-that you support or you-you accept some people who are abusive or violent or that kind of thing.

When you look at how some people struggle with coming to terms with what they consider to be a difference, you have to take that into account. You might not agree with it and you need to tell them. But you also need to take that into account when you're presenting because what you could be doing is sort of overwhelming people and consequently losing any iota of support that we may have been able to get from them if we were a little bit more sensitive umm and I think we need to pay more attention to that. Because it's a lot coming at people, at some people at the same time.

If you- if you- if you-and I don't even want to talk about the religious part of it-but if you are not somebody who has ever sort of identified somebody as a gay person or so and then all of a sudden you hearing well okay not only is the person gay, the person umm wants to-to-to have umm physiological changes umm they-they...And while that is going on they're on the TV I don't know, protesting or talking or doing so so so and then they-they challenge you for a position where you're working and you...You see how much thing going on in your orbit right there? All of which you were not prepared for? And I think that we really need to consider a little bit more deeply really how, how we can approach people who are not supportive. Because I think in the final analysis at a human level, everybody going to come around but the degree and the rapidity with which you-you come at people sometimes, you could lose more than you gain and I think we have to be careful around that. Umm and I think that that is a-a conversation that feminist activists could have with people in the LGBTQI community umm as a human rights issue and as a development issue.

I remember years ago when my mother-I could take my mother and brother as examples-when my mother said to me she was going to the wedding of one of

her coworkers. 'She marrying a woman you know. Well I ain't agree but that is she life and she's a nice girl I like she, I going.' You hear me? My brother... this... I don't remember the man's name, it was a gay rapper and I'm looking at my brother and whatever cornrow hairstyle the man had and I'm seeing my brother with it and I'm saying 'Mmhmm it have all kind of ways to come at thing. All kind of ways.' The cussing and the fighting and the getting on, it have a space for that but sometimes you need to mix it up, you know? So you and your mi...what it is you call them? Your sexual minorities?

D: Sexual minorities Folade, get with the programme!

F: But Deborah you see I am not sure how much of a...in a minority people are because this is a highly sexualised not only country but region.

D: That is an interesting observation.

F: That-that-that's my point I was making when I talked about allyuh put allyuh head on a block and talk about sexual minorities because I'm saying I'm not prepared to put my head on no block and say that we have...that this group of people we're referring to are in the minority because I mean...And especially a place like Trinidad and Tobago. I mean we bright you know and very very curious. Yes!

D: So Folade we talked about WINAD, we talked about policy, we talked about all of that. Looking back at your work tell me umm one of the best times, umm a period you like to celebrate and acknowledge, an activity you like to celebrate when you're thinking?

F: An activity I like to celebrate or that I have celebrated?

D: You have celebrated. When you think about a good spot you think about that.

F: I think in terms of... in terms of WINAD's work, that Arms Trade Treaty, that was the high point. That Arms Trade treaty just brought together strategy, research, advocacy, that was the high point. You couldn't stop thinking for that entire campaign. I mean I'm talking about ten years you know. I look at how we built up that campaign to ensure that we had a victory at the UN.

In 2006...You, you came to the meeting in Antigua? I remember in 2006 I looked around and I said 'but this problem we have in this country here'...So of course we already had it in Jamaica and historically it's-it's-it's just going to spread across the region. I just kind of systematically went about just identifying people and organizations and started off with like twelve I think and just built that CDRAV. Because I also realized from the struggle I was going through with civil society and government to see CARICOM as a player, that unless you could bring your numbers to the table, they're not going to take you seriously, you have to fight too hard. So if we had groups in the different countries doing what we were doing here, nobody could count out CARICOM and our governments would not be able to say no to us.

So it was that kind of build up over time. And I-I think I-I think that has been WINAD's best moment, that Arms Trade Treaty. I mean you just had to see that thing in action you know. When you see...I mean we didn't talk about how we mobilized governments across this region. We brought together an expert group for that negotiation you know, for the preparatory meetings for the negotiations and for the negotiations. So for example we brought Customs, Immigration, Police, National Security, Foreign Affairs... went about systematically identifying those people's IMPACS of them on board so that... You see because my thing is the people who want to count you out as them string of islands down inside there with some beach, they don't ever think that you have the human resource capacity because they haven't experienced it. So in all fairness to them they haven't experienced it. Their knowledge of us is that's a real good place to go for vacation, okay? And therefore we have a responsibility, when we come to the table, we have to bring our best team. So we went about getting the best team.

D: How you get the best team?

F: Identify them all over the place. Well I went to IMPACS early, that IMPACS was another story you know.

D: CARICOM IMPACS?

F: Yes.

D: What's CARICOM IMPACS's responsibility?

F: CARICOM IMPACS...Umm they do research and strategy for the region.

D: Okay, around security?

F: Yes yes yes. That's the agency. And that Francis Forbes who was the Commissioner of Police in Jamaica, you talk about steups? You talk about steups? I had to board him at a breakfast table in St Lucia. I have a reputation you know.

D: What is that reputation Folade (laughs)?

F: She don't give up. This man from the Quakers used to tell them, he say 'you see that woman, she don't stop you know. She don't stop.' I remember when I invited, when I took Luana, Luana to come with me to the first meeting in the UN I said 'I'm telling you, walk with a comfortable pair of shoes.'

D: Why?

F: Because I don't sit down.

D: Who's Luana?

F: Louana was one of our members in those early days so she would've come to the maybe 2003 meeting or so at the UN. Remember when I told you I told IANSA give me the money and I'll bring people? So me and Louana went! Yes. And so she used to be the Deputy Mayor of Arima. I met her when I met Sattie and I identified the two of them I say 'I want to work with those two women.' And when I-I start to operate it's like I get to your meeting. Before I come to your meeting I tell you I know what I'm walking away with, anything I get in addition to that is-is lagniappe. I know what I have to say and I know what I have to do. And I didn't realise he used to be watching me so much and then he would say 'that Caribbean woman, she don't sit down.' Because from the time I land I.. Because you see I have to always come back with something eh? When I come home I'm coming back with something. I'm coming back with either contact for us, resources, something something. We must always benefit when we go to a meeting. I don't go to meetings and sit down and lime and I ain't encouraging nobody to do that.

So CARICOM IMPACS, I start to tackle them. That man wouldn't talk to me at all, he wouldn't talk to me, he wouldn't talk to me, he wouldn't talk to me. Alright, just on his case, on his case, on his case. Eh heh? (Laughs) I in St Lucia at a meeting, who's at the-the...at the same hotel? He's at the same hotel. Well I come down the morning and I see him sitting down having breakfast with somebody in my...but my rude self no manners, I went across, introduced myself to him. He said 'no but I know you.' I said 'well I-I wasn't sure.' I said...I ask him for my two seconds. I mean in a situation like that what do you do? So he finished his breakfast and we talked and from that it began to get better. And then...Because Lance Selman who was in charge of CARICOM IMPACS before, he knew of our work when we started on this security work before. So by the time umm Forbes came we already had a relationship with IMPACS. Umm and then he wasn't the leader, it was the woman who was even more elusive. So I said 'well me ain't bothering you know. He is the Operations man so I'm going and bother he. She go reach at some point.' Umm and you see the other thing I would always make sure that they know what we're doing. Whatever we're

doing I'd make sure they know and so they have information. So then I started to get in with him and then got involved with the staff and so on and yes.

So by the time we reached to ATT, it's WINAD who did all the thing. I would go and sit down and say 'who are the people in this region?' Because I don't know them. These are security people, I don't know them. 'Who are the people in this region in terms of security?' And they're very hesitant to give you information. You have to dig them and dig them and laugh and talk and thing thing thing thing but we got it. I say 'I'm going after those people you know.'

There was a... I didn't know at the time there was a regional grouping of immigration and a regional grouping of...uh huh? Gone after them, everybody in-involved. Brought them to meeting and then umm we had a man here who was the deputy for Customs. He was very very good. Eden say 'Folade you need him too you know. You have to find money to bring him to the meetings too (laughs). 'You have to find money to bring him to the meetings too.' So umm...so yes and he became then part of our core... So when we were in the the prep meetings there. When you see we CARICOM... and CARICOM talking is not so... Eden or Thompson would make a statement for the whole gang of us and then we have the individual statements coming to back it up and I'm writing statement like crazy, everybody talking! (Laughs) So they start to watch CARICOM like 'what going on with them?' Yep. It was, it was that is WINAD'S finest moment because we built a whole project around giving CARICOM and Caribbean people visibility in the security arena. We did not have that before. If nothing else that's what I want recorded. That visibility.

D: So Folade, I am... you know, there-there are a lot of really interesting variables of work. I'm listening to you and I'm thinking 'how do we then record the whole idea of affecting international public policy, the fact that you have a model? The fact that...Tell me about making... Because you-you've kind of brought up a visibility but you've grounded it in this level of expertise. That is something we don't hear about.

F: What level of expertise you referring to?

D: I'm talking about the fact that CARICOM presented this face, this very professional, very... It's like listening to-to people talk about when the international meetings that used to happen when we were first independent. You know, trying to forge this identity and this whole third worldification of the global. And so I'm listening to you and that's the historical context that I come up with because it's the closest to me I've ever, I've ever, I've ever heard...

F: So stick a pin.

D: Stick a pin.

F: You see why that ties straight back to my NJAC experience? It's how you see people, that's what determines how you work for them and with them. I was gung-ho that we were going to be at that table but we were going to present ourselves just like anybody else because we can. You ain't fear nobody, you ain't fear nobody. You coming with what you have because what you have is good. And the other thing about it is that although we had all them government people, so you have IMPACS and you have this and you have that but you also have civil society right in there. When we raised money from the Australian Government to have four regional workshops here for them to craft their negotiating position, NGOs sitting around the table had equal space for talking and so. And you know you have some meetings that NGOs... well first of all you can't speak around the table and then you could only have input.. no no no no no...no no no no no.

And I am not sure that there's been a situation in our region where NGOs have raised money to fund government participation in meetings or workshops, I'm not sure. And we-we did that because I, when I looked left and right and I realised I say all of them go tell me they ain't have money, to a man they tell me they ain't have any money. They can't do this and they can't do that da da da da da. I'm not engaging in that you know, I'm going and find the money. When

I find the money you have to tell me you're not coming. If you're not coming you have to say why you're not coming. So we went out and we found the money.

D: So in other words you-you-you're advocating a model where NGOs make public policy because you do.

F: We do!

D: You do because you convene...To me that's very interesting.

F: We do!

D: You convened an entire discussion.

F: We do! We needed the governments to go and sit down because we can't. We need them to go and sit down and say 'da da da.' But you already line up the thing, you input in terms of the content that they're going to speak to. We do! We do it all the time which is why it's important for the masses to be with us as NGOs, as-as national organizations. It is important for the masses to be with us. They must be part of the thing. Every time we-we sit down, people in-in community based organizations or just generally umm people who have an interest in these things they must be part of it. The more people see how these things can be done, the more they are going to do it in their own organizations, in their own communities, in the country. Then no politician ain't coming to tell you 'come line up by me 4 o'clock in the morning to come and see me for some work or some house or some damn stupidity.' No no no no, people will say 'no no no no.' That's not how it...that's-that's-that was not the contract sir. 'Bring yourself here', you know? (Laughs). No I'm very clear in my head that we do. We do make policy. You ain't jumping out outside there and say 'da da da da da da!' But if that's what you want, you have to find a way to get it.

D: Folade, I've had you here, it was...it was day it is now night, tell me anything that you find that you've learnt in particular. Any obstacles that...

F: Along the way yes. I mean no I mean these things can be...So I mean even within the ATT process, one of the painful things for me was I suppose I see it and I knew it was going to happen, I just get kind of tired of it, and then I became disgusted with myself that I allowed myself to be disappointed. I find that we, Caribbean people and Caribbean activists, we are not sufficiently strong with maintaining our independence when we're relating to other NGO people.

D: You mean international?

F: Yes, yes. You know, I look at how easy it was for the Control Arms people to say to-to some of our people they would bring them to a meeting and I'm saying 'what you going there for? You coming for people to put you on showcase like...' You know that's one thing I'm very strong on. Every time you go to write something about this region, and Oh God it does irritate the life out of them, I'm sorry I can't change that. Every time you go to write something about this region, I would give you something positive about this region to write. You see this business about we catching we ass inside of here, we killing one another everyday, thing bad, we ain't have money, we-we poor, we-we-we...I don't go for that you know. I'm very sorry. No matter what you ask me about my people I will tell you 'We have a high level of gun homicide in Trinidad and Tobago and this is the reason. Da da da da da da.' And same breath I'm telling you that, I'm telling you what can be done about it. We must never be less than. You know, you cannot...(laughs) I mean the history of this region you going outside and letting people fool you with some meeting, to pay for you to come to some meeting for them to careen you all over the place as if....no no no no no no. So I-I... that is one of the things that disturbs me. Umm I really wish that we would not...

D: The way we represent ourselves?

F: The way we represent ourselves, sometimes it's not it's-it's-it's not sufficiently strong and proud and you know? And grounded. And I just think that that's what you are! So that's the way you should be presented. And I remember when Luanna was at one of those meetings with me she said 'but Folade look at the images.' They were making this presentation to the big assembly and they had these images and all the images of the Africans, this thing Oh God looking emaciated. I look at that and I say 'not where I come from, they ain't getting that. And to this day no matter what they try, I will not give them those stories. I will tell you that we have problems, you know? Like I say I'll tell you why and what should be done but no, no, we're much more than that you know? I'm not saying that we don't have that but if I'm presenting myself, we are much more than that and I have a responsibility to present who I am and... Because sometimes your circumstances has nothing to do with who you are. That's a passing... you know? So if you keep presenting this no... it's not coming out of WINAD sorry.

And it's something that I would say to people in the organization all the time. This work on gun violence, I mean as you know I've-I've had to lead that work eh umm and I think that one of the things I've learnt is how...I've learnt, I've learnt how to share sort of glory and-and that kind of thing umm but I've also learnt how fear has different faces, you know? Umm I have never been scared of doing this work. And I remember very early Denise De Bique used to call me 'Gun lady, gun lady but who send you in that? Oh God!' Umm but I've never, I've never been afraid. I mean no matter who I go by, you know, sometimes you know how kind of testy, you go by them fellas you don't know at what point somebody go jump out and come for them and all this. But I've never been afraid to do, to do this work. Umm...

D: When you say them fellas you're talking about the...

F: Yes.

D: Okay, community leaders.

F: Yes and I've been all kinds of places to find them. That's a next group again I had to go and find. You talk about steups. That little boy down in-in umm where he from? In Maraval there. That boy made me come by him three times.

D: I know we're supposed to be ending but I cannot understand how you used to get into these spaces!

F: How I used to get into these spaces? Because when people know the work you're doing, they are going to come to you and umm Martha come to me she said 'Folade, it have one of them I want you to meet' because she knew I was already meeting with... 'It had one of them, this one down there and thing thing thing thing'. I say 'alright, let we go.' She say 'alright I'll call and make the arrangements.' She call, we went down there, the first day we went, he ain't there, the tenant say 'he ain't there.' So-so I just, I say... well I wasn't surprised. She say 'but what time he coming?' 'I ain't know when he coming, I now going and meet him.' So she said umm 'well then we go come with you.' Tall, dark fella, he looked down at Martha 'you want to drive in car with gunman?' (Laughs) well of course in that moment you can't laugh! I was... if you see how that boy watch the girl and say 'Miss lady you mad? You want to drive in car with gunman?...' (laughs).

We went back a next day, he ain't there. Well the third time I say 'here's what'...and the joke about it is that you can't get up by him you know. From down below there is a sentry. So I said 'so here's what this is the third time I come here. I'm not leaving you know.' He responds -'Oh God Mother.' I say 'eh eh, not today.' 'I go sit down. Sit down on the, on the drain' (laughs). 'Sit down on the drain! Hungry! Heat! Tired! Story story. You know when the little crook pass, he come up in a car, when he pass me he was ducked down in the car (laughs) and then went up in the ranch peeping down at me and checking me out. And then took his good sweet time to come down. 'Mother'. I talk to him normal normal normal. I say 'alright' (kisses teeth). All kind of thing.

D: Last words Folade, last words to Caribbean feminists organizing.

F: Oh Jesus.

D: Alright Folade. Last words for policy making.

F: I...but I would be happier I think if umm Caribbean feminists just kind of understand that women... women are advocating on their own behalf. As feminists, what we do is add value to what work they do, what plans they have. But people don't wait for you to come and save them and I think that what we need to look at our work as, as adding value to women's lives because I think that if you look at it in that way it allows you to-to value what they bring too because everybody brings something. Mine might look different to yours but everybody's bringing something.

D: So I know I said the last question was the last question but I want to...we started with the personal and it's a question I always wanted. You answer your phone Alafia, what does that mean?

F: It just means greetings. It's a, it's a Yoruba...it is a Yoruba term means umm greetings. Yes. I live my belief you know. I live the things I believe in not fussy, simple, I just believe in these things, I good so. So people thing don't burn my eye (laughs). I believe in those things and umm in NJAC as well one of the things that was really important... You notice we started and I'm-I'm going back there at the, at the end too because NJAC has really shaped my life, my belief system, the whole works. One of the things that-that you learnt was humility. So I am not by nature a humble woman. Nope. But I know how to apply it. Most times I apply it at the right time, sometimes I don't (laughs) apply it at the right time but yes -I believe in people, I really believe in people. That's one of the things I'm really proud of is Asha³⁴. Yes she has a level of respect for people, she could live with people, she could roll kind of thing. Somethings she ain't, but she has a genuine love and respect for people. And that's one of the things that I really really am proud of that we were able to get her to be like that you know?

D: You're always thinking intergenerationally.

F: I think that's what life is.

D: That's interesting.

F: The people who paved the way for me. You know I tell you... like I tell you, I listen to people now talking about 'our people and my people...' Umm 'the Indian and them have and we have to get more land and...' And I say, 'What utter nonsense is this these people carrying on with?' I served in NJAC where if you got caught in a roadblock in the night in some kind of place... I mean, they wouldn't even read about you in the papers because they were not going to find you. So... and so you learn, you learn how important it is really to rely on people, to have faith and trust in people. When I hear people talk about trust no one I cannot understand that. I cannot understand that. I can't see life without trust. No matter who it is. I always say I will get my head bounce up because I start off trusting you. Every time you hear me say 'it's not me and you and thing thing' it's because something happened. But I start off trusting. Because I just think that that's what, that's what life is about and that's what I bring to my work. Umm pride, joy in people and seeing things-things, people benefit from things that they're supposed to.

I think that's why the ATT was so important for me because when I listened to how people were referring to us I said 'no, that can't happen.' And so that visibility in that security debate (kisses teeth), we don't have to worry no more! If they're going to have a discussion about security they'll say 'ey where CARICOM?' (Laughs) and we have fifteen votes which we must always remember.

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¹ Folade Mutota is the Executive Director of the Women's Institute for Alternative Development (WINAD) and the 2017 winner of Trinidad & Tobago's Medal for the Development of Women (Gold).

² Caribbean Black Power was a movement for radical change of the social and economic system of the Caribbean. While Caribbean Black Power possessed an autonomy rooted in indigenous movement for black self-assertion, it questioned the capacity of the independence movements to deliver an end to inequities such as racial privileging, real economic and social improvement and more democratic politics (Meeks 2014)

³ Women's Institute for Alternative Development (WINAD) is a civil society organization which was founded in 1991 by Folade Mutota, Sattie Narace and Jillian Duncan. Much of WINAD's work is committed to strengthening the capacity of women and social consciousness among women and girls to lead social transformation in Trinidad & Tobago (<https://www.winad.org>).

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⁵ National Joint Action Committee (NJAC) was formed in February 1969 from a federation of organizations. NJAC has been at the forefront of the movement for a New Society in Trinidad & Tobago and the Caribbean. But the impact of the mass movement lead by NJAC and its ideological direction left a permanent influence on the society and had reverberations throughout the Caribbean.

⁶ Makandal Daaga, born Geddes Granger in 1935. He was a Trinidad and Tobago political activist and former revolutionary. Daaga was the leader of the 1970 Black Power Revolution. During the unrest he was arrested and charged. In February 1969, Granger founded the NJAC National Joint Action Committee, a now-quiescent political party. In 2013 Daaga was awarded the Order of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago (ORTT). Daaga died on 8 August 2016.

⁷ Ako Mutota was Folade's husband. Together they parent her daughter Asha.

⁸ Laventille is a ward of Trinidad and Tobago, located immediately east of Port of Spain. Laventille is probably the oldest community in East Port of Spain. It has been said, whenever the enslaved peoples escaped from man's inhumanity to man, they headed to the Hills of Laventille. Used as inspiration for works such as Lovelace's the Dragon Can't Dance, Laventille has a long history of cultural significance to the history of Trinidad & Tobago, including being the birth place of the steel pan. In recent years, Laventille has become synonymous with high levels of crime. The name has also been used as a general term for the neighbourhoods of eastern Port of Spain, including not only Laventille "proper" (Success Village, Trou Macaque, Never Dirty) but also East Dry River, John-John, Sea Lots, Beetham Gardens, Caledonia, Maryland, Mon Repos, Chinapoo and Morvant.

⁹ The United National Congress (UNC) is one of the two major political parties in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and one of the main parties in the current opposition. It was founded by Basdeo Panday, a lawyer and former trade unionist. The UNC was formed as the result of a split in the ruling National Alliance for Reconstruction in 1988. The UNC is largely an East Indian led and based political party.

¹⁰ The intergenerational project is a WINAD mentorship initiative entitled, Becoming a Big Sister: Make a Difference in a Girls Life. Professional women between the ages of 25 - 40 were paired with younger girls to form a healthy mentoring relationship.

¹¹ Trinidadian term for hanging out.

¹² Guy refers to Hilton Guy, Commissioner of Police in Trinidad & Tobago 1998-2003

¹³ Jules Bernard, Commissioner of Police in Trinidad & Tobago 1978-1987

¹⁴ “allyuh” (Trinidadian English) – “you all” or colloquially “y’all.”

¹⁵ Randolph U. Burroughs Commissioner of Police in Trinidad & Tobago 1978-1987. For many Trinidadians Burroughs represented that strong hand recruited by the State to eliminate the Black Power constituency throughout Trinidad and Tobago.

¹⁶ The Inter Agency Task Force (IATF) is a special unit within the Trinidad & Tobago Police Service, launched in September 2012, mandated to reduce crimes, especially murder. IATF concentrated its activities in areas such as Laventille, Beetham Gardens, and Sea Lots (Joint Select Committee 2013, 23).

¹⁷ 1990 refers to the attempted coup in Trinidad, which was led by the Jamaat al Muslimeen.

¹⁸ International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA) is the global movement against gun violence, linking civil society organizations working to stop the proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons (<http://www.iansa.org/aboutus>).

¹⁹ Caribbean Coalition for Development and the Reduction of Armed Violence (CDRAV) was the outcome of a 2008 workshop on civil society’s response to crime and violence in the Caribbean. Workshop participants included civil society organizations from 7 CARICOM countries (Anyanwi 2014, 69). WINAD served as the secretariat for CDRAV.

²⁰ References a coalition lobby with the expressed goal of repealing the legality of child marriages in Trinidad and Tobago, http://www.winad.org/45_Exception_to_the_age_of_marria accessed 11/05/17

²¹ Eden Charles is a career diplomat, posted to the Trinidad and Tobago Permanent Mission to the United Nations in 2005. Charles was later appointed Ambassador to the mission.

²² A dental fricative used to express disgust, annoyance or dismissal.

²³ “Bad” here is not intended to connote “corrupt,” rather, the usage is intended to convey having a reputation for a no-nonsense approach.

²⁴ Martin Joseph held the office of Minister of National Security (2003-2010).

²⁵ At this point Folade is identifying the futility of the state’s propensity to see the increased use of guns by the police as the appropriate response to gun violence.

²⁶ Permanent Secretary (PS)

²⁷ Patrick Manning held the office of Prime Minister for the periods 1991-1995 and 2001 -2010.

²⁸ Bill refers to Sean ‘Bill’ Francis, a reputed gang leader from Morvant, just east of Port of Spain. Bill died in April 2009 (<http://www.guardian.co.tt/archives/news/crime/2009/06/09/second-accused-sean-francis-killing-court>).

²⁹ This 2004 meeting referred to was a meeting convened by WINAD at the Royal Palm Hotel and Conference Centre in Maraval, a suburb west of Port of Spain. Invited to this meeting was a cross-section of community/'gang' leaders, some religious leaders and other men of influence within vulnerable communities in Trinidad and Tobago. WINAD members convened this meeting because they were convinced that the conversation among these groups was fundamental to making a difference in how we understood the movement of guns and their influence on the quality of life in some communities. The meeting was a watershed moment in WINAD's work on gun violence in Trinidad and Tobago. It was also significant to the community/'gang' leaders at that time. They began to recognize the place of their voice framing a national response to gun violence. The meeting also complicated WINAD's activism, because it soundly placed the group as power brokers on both sides of the legal divide of gun violence in Trinidad and Tobago. Additionally the human face of gun violence became evident on both sides of this divide, providing new insight and complex responsibilities for any civil society actor attempting to engage in this work.

³⁰ Nelcia Robinson, former coordinator for the Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action (CAFRA) (1996-2009).

³¹ Biche is a rural community located in the east of Trinidad. It is 18 kilometers south of Sangre Grande in the east and 18 kilometers north of Rio Claro in the South. 2014/2015 WINAD partnered with the Institute for Gender and Development Studies the UWI St Augustine, Rape Crisis Centre and Women Working for Social Justice to undertake the project entitled the Women's Conversation Caravan. The Caravan was an important research initiative and Biche was the first community the Caravan visited. The project offered insight into:

- How geography, race, socio-economics and other frames produce different definitions and positions on the same issue.
- It interrogates and orders personal, community-based, national development priorities through the lens of women's lived experience.
- It allows women to speak with NGOs and academic partners in the field of women and gender to shape policy, programming and future research to advance gender equity and equality in Trinidad and Tobago.
- The Conversations create a collaborative space for women's organizations beyond the two lead organizations to reconcile the project and programming activity of their respective organizations with the needs of diverse constituencies of women across the nations (Mutota & McFee, 2016).

³² URP- Unemployment Relief Programme is designed to provide short term employment for unemployed citizens of Trinidad & Tobago

³³ CEPEP- Community-Based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme – similar to URP, but originally designed to build self-sustainable companies from the services being offered by workers.

³⁴ Asha Mutota is Folade's daughter.



Social Media and Feminist Social Change in the Caribbean: An Interview with Ronelle King on #LifeInLeggings

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Abstract

In this interview, Ronelle King, founder of the hashtag and organisation, #LifeInLeggings in Barbados, discusses her experiences in raising awareness and advocating for policy to end gender-based violence in the Caribbean. The interview focuses on her motivation to build awareness about sexual violence through a feminist consciousness, the reception she received by other Caribbean women and men and, last, her evaluation of social media as a tool for organising. King converted the momentum of #LifeInLeggings on social media into a young women-led organisation dedicated to policy change in Barbados. Her movement adds to the growing interest in cyberfeminisms in the Caribbean and to the longer study of social movements for gender justice in the region.

Keywords: Caribbean feminism; youth; gender-based violence; social media

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Introduction

Ronelle King is a twenty-four year old feminist activist in St. Michael, Barbados. She created her first e-mail address at the age of nine. At 14-years old, she discovered online literature, blogs and social media personalities that promoted women's and LGBTQ rights. Her story offers an example of the many young Caribbean women who develop their feminist consciousness with more accessible scholarship and popular readings on the internet, and not in the academy. In this interview, I aim to illustrate the potential of youth-led feminist organising in the Caribbean for gender justice with social media.

By the 1970s, in the study of development, previous convictions about economic indicators as the most significant measurements for social progress were weakened when experiences of greater inequalities accompanied target levels of economic growth (Kabeer 2003). Particular attention was made to gender, especially the experiences of women who were seen to be “left behind” by development approaches. For this reason, violence against women and violations of women's human rights are not marginal, but central to the construction of development policy. In November 2016, young women in the region took to social media to discuss experiences of sexual violence with the trending hash tag #LifeInLeggings. The stories ranged from personal experiences about abuse by family members to sexual harassment in capital cities, a walk of harassment on the way home from school or cases of rape that occurred in the home or in a taxi. Male dominance does not always require a set of organised patriarchal practices because they come to constitute social life for men in the form of privilege. Men's patriarchal domination and control can be channelled in less overt ways in public, especially against young women by the policing of female sexuality (Sen 2002, 144). Verbal assaults, outspoken judgements of their dress and action and worse, sexual violence and harassment are everyday occurrences of violence against women in the region. This is evidenced by Ronelle King's experience of violence and coming face-to-face with inadequate responses of the enforcement arm in the justice system – a story that too commonly occurs for women and worse, is too commonly accepted to

be the norm. Hence, in order to empower the state as an agent for gender justice, beyond legislative frameworks and parliamentary priorities, a cultural shift in the language and social relations is important to advance the political imperatives of gender policy.

Feminists throughout the region hosted a series of public fora to address the trauma and possible solutions since #LifeInLeggings. These discussions were led by young women, especially lesbian and queer, in and out of the academy. As this powerful conversation began to inform news headlines throughout the region, some men initiated an anti-women's rights campaign of victim blaming on women who shared their stories with the reactionary hash tags #LifeInPants and #EggplantEntries. The aim of this online backlash was to invalidate the movement created by women that challenged men to think about their complicity with rape culture.

In Jamaica, the political militancy of the Tambourine Army and strong showing of civil society support in Trinidad and Tobago for the #LifeInLeggings regional solidarity march highlight the potential of youth feminist organising in the region and unveil some of the possibilities and limitations of activism today. At The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus, the UWI Socialist Student Conference organised a creative exhibit, titled "Wall of Justice #LifeInLeggings," that encouraged participation among the student body to share experiences of pain and healing in relation to sexual violence. Writing experiences on post-it notes, in a display that lasted six hours, we received over 60 stories about rape and sexual assault from students. As a socialist feminist activist, I was moved to further advance the feminist aims of our organisation. For this reason, I interviewed Ronelle King, founder of the #LifeInLeggings movement in Barbados. As the discussion unfolded I became interested in the following questions:

1. How did the #LifeInLeggings movement transition from an online discussion to an organised movement?

2. What is the impact of online activism and youth organising on state policy and decision-making?
3. Why is activism around policy important for the lives of young Caribbean people today?

I position this interview as a feminist discussion from the perspective of Caribbean youth. While some scholars have noted the decline of women's organisations in social and political life in the English-speaking Caribbean (Henry-Wilson 2004, 59), young voices of a new generation of scholars and activists have given energy and added to the intersectional analyses of the movement, especially in the area of sexuality, to help sustain the women's and feminist movements. The #LifeInLeggings movement illustrates the potential for Caribbean social change and activism around gender policy through the creative use of technology. As a medium this interactive frame that is being built between feminist discourses and the use of social media platforms arguably expands the kinds of feminist mobilisations that can occur. In particular, this digital conduit's capacity to mobilise within and outside of the academy potentially answers a long-standing critique of Caribbean feminisms: it's dislocation from the lives of everyday women. Caribbean feminists have always strived to ground their theoretical analyses in everyday life; #LifeInLeggings and similarly situated movements have expanded the participation and co-writing of such grounded theorising.

Background to the Movement and Organisation

AS: As a founding member of the Life In Leggings organisation, could you share a brief assessment of the personal and social contexts in which your organisation emerged?

RK: Life In Leggings: Caribbean Alliance Against Gender-based Violence was founded to tackle the rape culture and gender-based violence in the Caribbean region. The movement began with an online hashtag, #LifeInLeggings, that created a safe space for women who experienced sexual harassment and sexual assault. Women, encouraged by solidarity, were empowered to speak out on their social media platforms about their experiences. The hashtag went viral, making an appearance in countries all around the globe.

Going viral in eleven other Caribbean countries; Trinidad & Tobago, Dominica, Jamaica, Belize, Antigua & Barbuda, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent, Grenada, Guyana and The Bahamas, while making an appearance in others where there was a language barrier such as Haiti and in the South American continent, Brazil. The diaspora greatly assisted with the hashtag trickling into international countries such as the United Kingdom, USA, Canada, India, China, Japan, Denmark, and Belgium. As a result, the hashtag was featured in Knack Magazine, the BBC, India Times, Stop Street Harassment and a number of regional and local blogs and media sites. However, it particularly championed the experiences of women and girls throughout the Caribbean region and its diaspora as this was the community it originated from and the community it wanted to challenge.

Life in Leggings was born out of frustration due to personal experiences of sexual violence and street harassment. I recently had an experience of almost being kidnapped in broad daylight. My confidence in the ability of the police to protect me dwindled when they refused to take my statement regarding the

incident because they deemed it a waste of their time. I was on my way to work and was offered a ride to which I politely declined. My attacker tried to pull me into the vehicle and I ran away in the opposite direction to a friend's house where I called my workplace to let them know I'd be late and why. I went to the police station to make a report where I was met with a nonchalant attitude by a male police officer. After requesting somewhere more private to talk as there was an audience, he dismissed my request and began to engage with the audience to reaffirm to me that no one cared so it was not necessary to go somewhere private. When I began to recount my experience, the officer did not engage me citing that he had other work to do so he'd be doing it while I spoke as well as assessing if it was really an issue that would require him to take notes of my experience. During my retelling, the officer would at times chuckle and act as though I was over-exaggerating my experience. I was gutted and immediately left in tears. I returned to work, attempting to move on with my life.

The lack of access to justice through the police force for women is well known. I thought about ways to shake up the system to address rape culture. However, it would be months before I actually did something impactful. #LifeInLeggings was purposely coined to dispel the myth that only certain types of women are harassed and are deserving of their assault or abuse because of the way they are dressed. Leggings is a "controversial" piece of clothing. While in most places it is an accepted piece of clothing to wear as pants, in the Caribbean it is not. Wearing it without a top or a dress that covers the private area creates the perception that you are "slack" or inviting sexual harassment which isn't true. Due to this, we thought it would be the best example to show the clothing has nothing to do with street harassment. Plus, [the phrase is] heavy on alliteration.

The success of the hashtag provided documentation of all varieties of violence against women in the Caribbean. It showed the need for an organisation which championed equal rights yet understood the socio-economic complexities of the differing Caribbean countries in order to create a lasting impact. It also highlighted that the message of equality needed to be presented in a way that

was both accessible and flexible, with [an NGO] structure enabling independence and support and a method that could be applied to other countries.

AS: On November 20, 2016, Barbados celebrated 50 years of independence. Your feminist activism sustained public attention on women's experiences in everyday life – public transport, at schools, on street corners, in the workplace, etc. How does the concept of 'gender' offer a critique of citizenship in Barbadian society?

RK: The emergence of the hashtag sparked national discussion about gender inequality not only in the context of sexual violence but also how men and women are socialised. One of the much needed discussions that emerged from the topic of discussion was how our present is heavily influenced by our colonial past. How women, despite attaining some rights, still suffer from the patriarchal values our society upholds and that while some progress is great, we still have much further to go in order to achieve gender equality. Many women are still seen as property and not people; and, the more marginalised they are, the less they are seen as a person deserving of rights. We are finally coming to a place where women are holding their government accountable for their obligation to ensure that as citizens they are protected from all forms of discrimination.

There was a woman who shared an experience where she was turned away from the police station after being raped. Her clothes were torn as a result of the attack and though she tried to explain this to the police, they still refused her citing an archaic law about "dressing decently" when going into a government office. She had to go home, bathe and change her clothing to then give her statement, be taken to the hospital to have a sexual assault forensic exam (rape kit) performed where even there she was re-victimised. The doctor who came was male and she described him as rough and unprofessional. Her case was eventually tossed out because the rape kit's evidence was not collected properly ruling it unusable. Under the hashtag she was able to find a voice to tell

her story and appeal to government officials to ensure that no woman has to experience what she did. Due to her resilience, her story was one of many that were told to the committee members when we represented civil society at the 67th Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women.



Reclaim Our Streets march in Bridgetown, Barbados on March 11, 2017.
Photography by Ebonnie Rowe (Honey Jam Barbados).

Responses to #LifeInLeggings

AS: What has been the response of the state to #LifeInLeggings? And, was there any impact on Caribbean policy formation?

RK: The state has been supportive thus far. We've had female politicians not only coming forward to share their story but showing interest in policy reform as it relates to protecting women from gender-based violence. There's a lot of work to be done but this interest has also shown that violence against women and girls affects women at all levels. We are currently looking at the Sexual Offences Act, Minor Offences Act and the recently amended Human Trafficking Bill to propose amendments that are more inclusive and offer a wider range of protection for all women, especially those who are marginalized. We are also looking at archaic laws which re-victimise underage girls when they try to escape abusive situations to provide them with an avenue to receive justice as well as creating support systems to aid them in their healing.

Barbados recently amended the Domestic Violence (Protection Orders) Act in 2016 but there is still an Employment Sexual Harassment Bill that has been pending for more than a decade. Since the conversation about sexual harassment has been ongoing, discussion about finally passing the bill has been the topic of both government and civil society.

We wrote one of two shadow reports in response to the state's report for our fifth to eighth periodic review and delivered one of two oral statements for CEDAW. In both reports we highlighted the sexual harassment bill. As a result of this action, it was brought up by the committee during the state's review to which we were witness so we heard when they said that they would complete it by the end of the year. We intend to hold them to it and follow up on its progress throughout the year.

AS: What have been the responses by men in the region to #LifeInLeggings?

RK: If I am to be completely honest, it's been a mixed bag. However, it's been more positive than negative. I've been seeing a number of men checking their privileges and recognising their role in eradicating gender-based violence. There was a particular thread on Facebook about how they'll be keeping an eye out for the men who believe they're entitled to women's bodies around crop over events so that the women can have a chance to enjoy the festivities as well. On the flip side, I saw a Facebook live video about a guy who really thought women were just whining about the attention they were "asking for". He even at one point asked how else do we expect men to approach us. Re-affirming that some men do not actually know how to respectfully approach a woman and more importantly, how to take rejection without reacting violently¹.

Everyone has a role in eradicating gender based violence, especially men. Men can get involved by holding their friends and fellow man accountable for their actions. They can volunteer with NGOs whose mandate is to eradicate gender based violence and end rape culture. One of the most important things they can do is listen to the experiences of the survivors without dismissing them and use it to reflect on their actions in the past and the ways they have contributed to the problem so that they can be better in the future.

We currently have a male volunteer who is engaging in domestic violence prevention training as a representative of the organisation so that he could be an agent of change. These are the kind of actions that can benefit the movement.

AS: What role, if any, did the #LifeInLeggings have in advancing LGBTQ justice?

RK: I think we've only touched the surface when it comes to advancing LGBTQ justice but we're working on ways to making their injustices more visible. Our platform was inclusive and provided them a judgment-free space to break their

silences and in return receive the support that they deserve. There is much more that we'd like to do and are in the process of doing.

We'd like to offer sexual and physical violence services and support systems which are specifically tailored to and for the LGBTQ community. Services that are professional, respectful and judgement-free for survivors who choose to disclose their identity; public service announcements which include the LGBTQ community and highlight the issues they face regarding physical and sexual violence.

We do have members of the LGBTQ community in the organisation, including one member who is extremely open about her sexual identity and has the responsibility of Acting Director when I am out of island on a mission. She is also a project facilitator for the organisation and liaises with possible partner/organizations who share the same goal.

Before the movement came about there was a story posted in the gossip column, Pudding & Souse, in our newspaper, Nation, about a masculine-expressive lesbian being raped with the headline, "Male Medicine". The LGBTQ community and quite a number of Barbadians were outraged at the post and demanded an apology. I believe that was an introduction into the ways women in the LGBT community are affected by gender-based violence. We are working towards creating more inclusive and specifically tailored spaces for them to increase access to justice and healing.

AS: What was the response by Caribbean feminists in the academy and activists to your movement?

RK: It was phenomenal. They were some of the first people to catch wind of the movement and help facilitate it in their respective countries. The Institute for Gender and Development Studies has been a huge pillar or support for the

team and participants.

During the 16 Days of Activism they made space in their showcases across the universities for the experiences of the survivors. Lecturers at the Cave Hill Campus such as Dr. Tonya Haynes² began documenting the stories and the movements of the organisation. They provided us with data and research whenever we requested and helped to facilitate some live panels. In universities around the region the same applied, academics such as Dr. Gabrielle Hosein at The UWI St. Augustine [Campus] wrote about #LifeInLeggings in her column at the Guardian Newspaper in Trinidad and Tobago³. Activists of both genders were extremely willing to throw their support behind the movement and disseminate the message of #LifeInLeggings across the region. It was because of their efforts that we were able to co-ordinate and execute a simultaneous march titled Reclaim Our Streets across seven Caribbean countries in less than three months. The idea for the march came about early in December 2016, when we were transferring the online conversation to a more physical space. I conceptualised the Reclaim Our Streets: Women's Solidarity March which was a civil society-led regional march around International Women's Day organised by our organisation, Life In Leggings: Caribbean Alliance Against Gender-based Violence Through Education, Empowerment and Community Outreach.

The march took place in Barbados, Saint Lucia, Trinidad & Tobago, Dominica, The Bahamas, Guyana and Jamaica. The intention of this march was to be a stepping stone in creating support systems that educate the public about the trauma caused by sexual abuse and ways in which the community can come together to prevent abuse, protect and create conditions in which victims of abuse can be healed. It was a political pledge by each country to unite to end gender-based violence together. We marched in memory of the women and girls we lost, in solidarity with the survivors of gender-based violence and for future generations of girls who have yet to come so that they may never experience what we did.

The successes were that we made people pay attention and realise that this was not a fad. We were serious about our mandate and we would no longer be suffering in silence. We marched along the paths we would normally take alone with hundreds of other women and whereas we'd normally be afraid to speak out against the harassment, we were shouting and verbally fighting back. It was empowering. People poured out into the streets from shopping malls in Barbados to watch us, cars stopped and honked in support, even our police escort chanted along.

Our shortcoming was because of the political uprising that threatened the march; we lost a bit of funding from an international human rights entity which is unable to participate if there is political unrest. Due to this happening a month away from the march, we had to scramble to secure just the bare minimum to be able to still have the march. All our efforts up until the morning of the march were invested in just getting the march to come off without a hitch so we were unable to properly advertise and advocate for the wide range of women who would have initially been invited to march. We no longer had the funding to accommodate women who were elderly and disabled. We didn't have the funding to properly advertise it as a safe space for sex workers to join us, etc. We didn't have the funding to provide seating and emergency services for pregnant women or injured women though they still came to represent. However, it was a learning experience and we intend to do better in the future.



Women's Rights March and Rally in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago on March 11, 2017.
Photography by Mickel Guanfranco Alexander (Guanfranco Media).

AS: There were intense debates on social media about Jamaica's Tambourine Army's aims and strategies. Still, there were many voices of solidarity in the region that supported the Tambourine Army's defence of children and victims of gender-based violence. I believe that their organisation put front and centre the emotions that are embedded in activism when deep considerations are made on the racial, classed and gendered textures of our Caribbean societies. The Tambourine is a metaphor of breaking silences with noise and it can also be employed as a weapon against injustice. What is your assessment of the developments in Jamaica which took a very different course from mobilisations in Barbados?

RK: Each Caribbean country is different and violence against women, while it is a regional problem, affects women more severely in different countries. In Barbados, a social discussion at a national level emerged and this was significant but every country had to address their challenges as they saw fit. The Tambourine Army in Jamaica was a movement of radical women who dealt with a very horrible situation. They spoke out against the tolerance for the death

of women and the pain of abused children. Society as a whole needs to do better. They said that a woman being killed was not normal. While I may not have taken their approach to our situation in Barbados, I can understand why women in Jamaica, who wanted to be taken seriously in their calls to end violence against women, did it in the way that they did. I think we should focus less on trying to police the ways in which the Tambourine Army got the attention of the public and ask why this approach was required in order to get the public's eye.

Social Media Organisation

AS: The #LifeInLeggings hashtag mobilised thousands of Caribbean women's voices in December 2016. The hashtag became a symbol for public speaking out against the pervasiveness of rape culture and sexual violence against women. The hashtag #LifeInLeggings was later transformed into an advocacy NGO. Can you discuss the relationship between online and 'offline' organizational activism?

RK: The relationship can be described as complimentary. Social media activism is used mostly to bring awareness to the issues that affect us and this can lead to reform. It has the power to bring people from all over the world to participate in important conversations. It delivers us the information in real time and provides us with an opportunity to receive fair and balanced coverage with little to no bias. It also gives us a platform to call out injustices and problematic behaviours such as misrepresentations and inaccuracies. Not to mention, it is accessible for persons who may not be able to join the conversation offline.

When the conversation has begun online, it's important to transfer it offline so that those who didn't participate online could also be aware of the issues. Also so that the constitutional and legislative framework can be set out and the community outreach programmes can be developed to protect persons who

are affected. Due to the fact that most persons are on social media, online activism has the potential to get more people involved.

AS: What is your opinion of the future of Caribbean feminism's online activism and cyberfeminisms?

RK: With movements such as the Tambourine Army, Leave She/Me Alone and LeveDomnik popping up after #Lifeinleggings, I think there will be lots more Caribbean feminist movements willing to resist misogyny masquerading as culture. Creating spaces on the internet to discuss and bring awareness to the issues that affect women using feminine solidarity to shut down any misogyny that may come their way. That's a future I am looking forward to being a part of.

AS: And can this future for gender justice online have an impact on the involvement of the state in our offline lives?

RK: I hope that there will be a more gender aware state, one that understands the complexities of gender relations in a developing country such as ours. We need to think creatively about how we tackle these issues as an island. The state should not just change laws by the dictates of international law and conventions, rather they should see the importance of ending all forms of discrimination against women as central to development. In addition, the relationship between women's rights and gender equality activists and the state should be complimentary. The state cannot fulfil its mandate on its own. In the future, I want to see deeper relationships for these actors. Our issue right now with the state is the policy blindness around gender; especially how it affects marginalised women. Conservative politicians put little effort into making relationships with gender activists but they are the ones who head the ministry and the relevant bureaux of affairs. Therefore, I want the complete opposite and see greater support for the women in civil society and the issues they raise to end gender inequalities. Then we will see a much more inclusive constitutional and legislative framework that reflects the interests of women and all their

experiences.

Conclusion

Ronelle King's experience organising #LifeInLeggings expounds the political terrain that Caribbean feminism operates in today. When there are high consciousness-raising moments for women online, these women run the risk of having their concerns invalidated or of opening themselves for attack; when there is an expression of support by the state for the causes of the women's movement, inaction with policy implementation impedes any progress; when men have a choice to join in solidarity to challenge men to end rape culture, complicity may have the last say. At the same time, her experience highlights the power of politicising the everyday experience of Caribbean women with the strength of people throughout the region. Whether young people are gaining political consciousness online or offline and policy makers respond to each sphere differently, there is an unquestionable impact made by those who use all fronts to meet Caribbean people where they are.

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² Dr. Tonya Haynes is a lecturer at the Institute for Gender and Development Studies, The UWI Cave Hill Campus and the founder and blog curator of CODE RED for gender justice! (<https://redforgender.wordpress.com>)

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Professor Patricia Mohammed: Reflections on Policy Making

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View on the IGDS You Tube Channel
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https://youtu.be/SPsT_2xGC7w

Abstract

This interview with Professor Patricia Mohammed highlights her reflections on more than 20 years in gender policy making across the Caribbean. It includes her experiences within the field, with a focus on how the process of gender policy making expanded her understanding of Caribbean society in unique ways. It explores the importance of forming relations with those in the state, on building consensus as part of the process of policy development and how to address the challenge of difference within the Caribbean. This interview provides an important and personal source of knowledge for Caribbean students, thinking about the benefits and contributions of gender policy making as well as the lessons that can be learned in order to continue working within the field. It also forms part of the "Making of Caribbean Feminisms", which is a research theme of the IGDS, St. Augustine Unit, dedicated to documenting the lives and contributions of Caribbean feminists and the development of Caribbean feminisms.

Keywords: gender, gender policy, gender justice, reflections, Caribbean feminisms, Making of Caribbean Feminisms

How to cite

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Professor Patricia Mohammed interviewed by Dr. Gabrielle Hosein
November 9, 2017

View on the IGDS You Tube Channel
Caribbean Review of Gender Studies Playlist
https://youtu.be/SPsT_2xGC7w

Patricia Mohammed is Professor, Gender and Cultural Studies and is currently the Campus Co-ordinator, School for Graduate Studies and Research, at The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus, Trinidad and Tobago. Her publications in relation to gender policy making include "Gender Equality and Gender Policy Making in the Caribbean" (in Public Administration and Policy in the Caribbean, edited By Indianna D. Minto-Coy and Evan Berman), and "Gender Politics and Global Democracy: Insights from the Caribbean" (in Global Democracy: an Intercultural Debate, edited by Jan Aart Scholte).



**Tonya Haynes: Review: Negotiating Gender, Policy and Politics in the Caribbean:
Feminist Strategies, Masculinist Resistance and Transformational Possibilities,
by Gabrielle Hosein and Jane Parpart**



Review

Negotiating Gender, Policy and Politics in the Caribbean: Feminist Strategies, Masculinist Resistance and Transformational Possibilities.

Hosein, Gabrielle Jamela and Jane L. Parpart. 2017.

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Keywords: Gender, Policy, Politics, Caribbean: Feminist Strategies, Masculinist Resistance

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Women's political participation has been a key area of feminist activism in the region with women's access to formal political power understood axiomatically as a resource which must be secured. The Caribbean's boast of the Americas' first elected woman head of government in 1980 and two women prime ministers serving simultaneously in Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago suggest that the study of women's political participation in the region should be of global interest. This timely volume returns to familiar Caribbean feminist territory by offering a feminist analysis of the state, breaking new ground in assessing feminist strategies of various kinds of state engagement. As a text which claims that its "aim was to gather original data that examined four feminist strategies to advance gender justice – women's political leadership, national gender policies, electoral quota systems and transformational leadership", the first chapter by editor Gabrielle Hosein disappoints as it reproduces biographical summaries of women political leaders in the Caribbean, the bulk of which are taken from Cynthia Barrow-Giles' notable *Women in Caribbean Leadership* (2011). This shaky start notwithstanding, the collection resounds with the cutting voices and forceful analyses of notable Caribbean feminist activists whose reflections and thought are not frequently captured in scholarship make it a singular and delightful text.

This carefully curated work sets individual chapters in critical dialogue with each other, making for a coherent whole. Deborah McFee seeks to understand just why Trinidad and Tobago's process of creating a national gender policy remains stalled after decades, while Dominica was able to ensure that theirs was not derailed by religious opposition, state inertia or masculinist backlash. Any optimism one might feel after reading McFee's creative analysis of narrative are undercut by the Maziki Thame and Dhanaraj Thakur's subsequent chapter on the neo-liberal nature of Jamaica's gender policy. Thame and Thakur call into question the very possibility of such state mechanisms to address gendered structural inequalities of race, ethnicity and class within a *desire* for development premised on redistributing wealth upwards. Thame and Thakur offer one of the finest critical chapters in the collection that should be required reading for all Gender and Development practitioners. Ramona Biholar

examines the spaces opened up by gender policies for men's gender conscious engagement. Ultimately her detailing of reactionary discourses of male marginalization remind us of earlier feminist work in the late 1990s and early 2000s on masculinist backlash to feminist activism. That she does not read in men's narratives moments of subversive speak is suggestive less of analytical lacunae and more of the intransigence of the ongoing recourse to the tactic of asserting male marginality in the face of attempts to redress gender injustice.

Natalie Persadie's meticulously detailed documentation of the implementation of quotas for women in Guyana demonstrates the role of strong feminist civil society organisations in being able to capitalise on moments of rupture and political transformation. It is the perfect introduction to Iman Khan's analysis of just what quotas have meant or not meant for women as citizens and political leaders in Guyana. In one of the collection's stand-out chapters, Khan's nimble analysis, punctuated by the voices of noted Guyanese activists like Andaiye and Karen De Souza, suggests that in the context of patriarchal relations of gender, quotas deliver no real power for women but may paradoxically be used to buttress popular sentiment on male marginalisation, invisibilise male power and cast women as enjoying special privileges that ought to negate the very quotas which are themselves an index of women's subordination.

Having taken us along the campaign trail, in the rum shops, through the formal and informal spaces of constitutional reform and policy-making, all sites of gendered and ethnic exclusions, the collection brings us back to feminist visions for more transformational and ethical modes of leadership. Eudine Barribeau's theorizing of gender systems and the political economy of gender is foundational to the framing of the text. While the authors fill her concepts with rich empirical detail there is very little evidence of them using their data to transform her theorizing. Shirley Campbell's introduction of a hybrid analytical framework designed to analyse women's transformational leadership is therefore refreshing. In the established editorial style, we are not allowed any moments of triumphalism or celebration. Denise Blackstock's portraits of two

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women leaders from St. Lucia demonstrate how even as women leaders refuse masculinist styles of leadership, they may in fact fall short of explicitly challenging structural gender oppressions and end up “inadvertently supporting and enabling the masculinist systems that keep women subordinated.”

The voices of the Caribbean women's movement are strong in this collection as are those of a new generation of Caribbean feminist scholars – like Aleah N. Ranjitsingh - in her intelligent assessment of Kamla Persad-Bissessar's tenure. It examines multiple English-speaking Caribbean countries, including many that are not frequently the subjects of academic attention. The collection is a treasury of Caribbean feminist scholarship for its stellar documentation of women's organizing and leadership in the region, feminist engagement with a masculinist state and the imbrication of globalized and local understandings of gender transformation.

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Film Review

Des Femmes et Des Hommes—A Missed Opportunity

Director Frédérique Bedos

[Jewel Fraser](#)

Writer and Journalist

Keywords: gender equality, Des Femmes et Des Hommes, UN, women's rights

How to cite

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Director Frédérique Bedos' film *Des Femmes et Des Hommes*, shown worldwide to mark International Women's Day 2017, takes viewers around the world to hear from highly-placed women experts on the plight of women globally and the need for gender equality. Bedos notes, at the beginning of her 2014 film, that she was inspired to make the film in response to then UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's statement that women's rights have suffered setbacks in the years since the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were established, which in turn has impeded achievement of those goals.

In a speech to mark International Women's Day in 2014, Ban Ki-moon said, "Throughout the world, discrimination against women and girls is rampant, and in some cases getting worse." The UN Head, almost a week later in his report to the 58th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, shed further light on the global state of the world's women. He prefaced his report by stating, "Countries reported that the persistence of deeply entrenched discriminatory social norms, stereotypes and practices that hold back progress on gender equality remain a significant challenge. In several countries, discriminatory or inadequate laws impede the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals by entrenching the lower status of women in the family, restricting women's access to productive resources such as land or failing to criminalize violence against women. "

He then went on to give details of various countries' efforts and failures to improve the situation of their women globally. Herein lies the missed opportunity for Bedos' film. Bedos could have mined the UN head's report for leads to real-world situations that she could have documented to "show not tell" in direct and concrete terms how concerted efforts have failed to improve the lot of women during the years of the MDGs. Indeed, Ban Ki-moon's report contains numerous specific references to government initiatives that Bedos could have investigated, as any seasoned journalist would have, to explore the tragic reality that, in too many countries, women's lives have not improved since the MDGs, as well as to provide insights as to the reasons for this failure.

Instead, Bedos frames the film's exploration of this subject by beginning with a discussion of why gender equality is so important to the welfare of all human beings. This narrative is propelled through interviews with upwards of nine women, seven of whom occupy positions of power and decision-making in various fields such as research, business, film, and development. The interviewees included the executive director of UN Women, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, and an FAO expert, both of whom provide some thought-provoking statistics and facts on the subject. Bedos then turns to considering the evidence in support of Ban Ki-moon's statement, as well as possible solutions, by interviewing an array of high-profile professional women from around the world, including Nicole Ameline, president of the Committee on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women; the CEO of Artémis, Patricia Barbizet, often described as one of the most powerful businesswomen in Europe; an Oxford University academic, Dr. Rama Mani; the prominent woman fashion editor from China, Hung Huang; the woman founder of Oxford Research Group, Scilla Elworthy; a British-Sudanese film-maker; and two international women journalists who were the target of rapists while on foreign assignment, among others.

However, in discussing the issue of gender inequality and potential solutions, the women experts rehearse much of what has been said already on the topic: the greater success of organisations where women share leadership positions, the need for laws to empower women, the grave demographic imbalances caused by the mass murder of female foetuses, and so on.

The film is, therefore, a good restatement of issues facing women around the world and paints a clear picture of why women's rights are human rights; it would be useful to general audiences not very familiar with the topic since it does deal with fundamental issues. Unfortunately, for policy-makers and activists already fully engaged with and aware of the issues, it serves up little new knowledge on which to base action, whereas reviewing the latest efforts under the MDGs to achieve gender parity may have provided new insights.

Alternatively, the film could have used the opportunity to ask the assembled experts to deliberate on why these efforts have not yielded the expected results. Indeed, such an engagement would have been an ideal opportunity to gain original and interesting insights.

Similarly, no attempt was made to analyse the factors which contribute to women's success in spite of them inhabiting and working within entrenched male hierarchical and patriarchal systems. An inquiry into the lives of women who nonetheless succeed in achieving a measure of autonomy and self-actualisation without overt confrontation would have provided a productive space to unpack another dimension of women's navigating patriarchy in innovative ways. The fact that more Saudi women than Saudi men attend university, with a significant number studying at universities outside of Saudi Arabia, is a case in point. Such women have an intimate understanding of the workings of deep-rooted systems of patriarchy, and they may represent repositories of knowledge on achieving self-fulfilment in the face of entrenched gender inequity.

Such insights would also have relieved the "woman is victim" theme that dominates so much discourse on gender and development. They would also have painted a more realistic picture of the challenges countries face in dealing with gender inequality than that presented by the somewhat, in my view, over-the-top discussion by the Jungian analyst who spoke of the 25,000 years before patriarchy when women were worshipped as the Mother Goddess.

Her contribution seemed inappropriate for a number of reasons. For one, women are not seeking to be worshipped or a return to some supposedly matriarchal society. Further, even in the field of psychology, it is held that acquiring the tools to unlearn detrimental ways of thinking is always more productive than, and in some cases preferable to, spending time in the analysis of how that thinking came about. Finally, the analyst fails to identify how this historical scenario she describes can provide an enlightened solution to

women's present predicament. This analyst's contribution strengthened the overall impression that the film is somehow disconnected from reality.

Indeed, the film fails to depict in real terms the evidence supporting the thesis that discrimination against women has, in some cases, worsened since the establishment of the MDGs. While I see the value of an expert-oriented approach, the primary weakness of the film is the absence of women talking about the unyielding reality of gender discrimination and its consequences to their lives and the lives of their daughters. Interviews with ordinary women, like a sales girl or secretary or schoolteacher, would have provided insights as to how their lives have deteriorated since the MDGs were announced by the UN in 2000, but these are palpably lacking from this film.

The high-profile interviewees should certainly have been in a position to discuss what was lacking in policymakers' decision-making that contributed to this surprising fallout from the MDGs. Instead of doing so, the film provides a vehicle for showcasing some of the most privileged women in the world expounding on gender inequality, covering ground that has already been covered often before.

In contrast, journalistic investigation into the experiences of ordinary women designed to uncover the root causes of the deterioration in women's rights in our modern era may have contributed more usefully to finding solutions for tackling gender inequality.

It is interesting to note that Bedos' approach to *Des Femmes et Des Hommes* differs from her 2010 project *Imagine* which she describes as rooted in her family background, as one of about 20 adopted children from difficult backgrounds. In that project, Bedos said in an interview with France24 in 2013, she sought to shine the spotlight on ordinary people who were using original and creative solutions to help others. In this project, she created videos that highlighted innovative projects that helped handicapped people, prisoners, the indigent

and others. In the interview, Bedos said these films were created to highlight work done to build a better world together [“bâtir le meilleur ensemble”], with the emphasis on ordinary people finding solutions.

In contrast, this 2014 film missed a real opportunity to continue on the track of giving voice to ordinary women whose insights might best explain why women's rights are still very much a work in progress despite more than a century of calls for gender equality, and whose perspectives might have offered realistic solutions for advancing women's interests. And it fails to deliver on its thesis, to explore the then UN Secretary-General's statement that women's situations may have deteriorated rather than improved over the past decade or more. This film, although not very helpful to persons deeply knowledgeable about women's and gender issues and development work, is an ideal intervention for persons who are new to this area. Groups such as first year women/gender and development students or practitioners entering the field would find the content relevant, since it does present the fundamental issues and the challenges of working towards gender equity and equality.





Never Asking for It

[Kervisha Cordice](#)

Writer, Poet, Spoken Word Artist



**View on the IGDS You Tube Channel
Caribbean Review of Gender Studies Playlist**

<https://youtu.be/DaLtwiWldsA>

Keywords: life in leggings, sexual abuse, child abuse, Caribbean feminisms, rape, sexual violence

How to cite

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Never Asking for It

Kervisha Cordice

Director: Christian Kendahl

Poet: Kervisha Cordice, 2Cents Movement

Production Assistant: Christopher Lou-Hing

Camera Operators: Shari Petti and Ismail Cameron

Editors: Shinelle Ambris and Stephen Daisley

Sound Operator: Tyler Graham

Dancer: Shanelle Cielto

Music: Slowmotion bensound.com

Featuring:

Kervisha Cordice

Amanda Mendes

Dominique Friday

Ismail Cameron

Liana Lai Awa

Raeanna Parag

Shari Petti

Zkori Bobb

Special Thanks to:

Sinead Hamel-Smith

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Celeste Clarke

Solange Plaza

Ronelle King

Luci Hammans

The Life in Leggings Movement

The University of the West Indies, St Augustine Campus Film Programme





ISSUE 11

Tool or Weapon? The Politics of Policy Making, Gender Justice and Social Change in the Caribbean

Contributors

[Arif Bulkan](#) is a Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Law at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago, where he currently lectures criminal law, constitutional law and human rights law. Before this he practiced law in Guyana as a prosecutor and then primarily in the area of criminal defence. In 2008 he obtained a PhD in Law from Osgoode Hall Law School in Toronto, Canada on the survival of the rights of Guyana's indigenous peoples. He is a co-founder and co-coordinator of the UWI Rights Advocacy Project (U-RAP) along with Tracy Robinson.

[Kervisha Cordice](#) is a student at The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus currently pursuing a Bachelors of the Arts in Literatures in English. As a lover of the arts, spoken-word artist and a writer, she finds great pride in the growth of the craft as well as the growth of those around her, in their craft. In her work, she addresses various social issues; particularly regarding women's rights and racial prejudice, as well as muses upon various life experiences.

[Jewel Fraser](#) is a Caribbean journalist who has worked at major newspapers in the region, and as a freelancer with major international publications, including the International New York Times and the Miami Herald. She is a lover of French with advanced proficiency in the language. She is also a graduate of the Humber College, Ontario, creative writing programme.

[Tonya Haynes](#) is a lecturer at the Institute for Gender and Development Studies: Nita Barrow Unit, University of the West Indies. Her research on Caribbean feminist thought and gender-based violence is published in *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism*, *sx:archipelagos*, *Global Public Health* and *Social and Economic Studies*.

[Gabrielle Jamela Hosein](#) is a Lecturer and Head of the Institute for Gender and Development Studies, has been involved in Caribbean feminist movement building for two decades. She also writes a weekly column, *Diary of a Mothering Worker*, for the *Trinidad Guardian*. She has a B.A. in Political Science from the University of Toronto, an M.Phil in Gender and Development Studies from The University of the West Indies, and a Ph.D in Anthropology from University College London. Her current research areas are politics and governance, Caribbean feminisms, Indo-Caribbean feminist theorizing, and sexualities.

[Dominique Hunter](#) (b. 1987, Guyana) is a multi-disciplinary visual artist whose works often critiques the (mis/non)-representation of Black female bodies in art historical text and imageries as well as the stereotypical portrayals of those bodies in contemporary print media. Her recent body of work has expanded to include personal strategies for coping with the weight of those impositions by examining the value of self-care practices to improved mental health and quality of life. Hunter completed her BFA (Hons) from the Barbados Community College in 2015 and was the recipient of the Leslie's Legacy Foundation Award for Most Outstanding Work at Portfolio. She has exhibited work in Los Angeles, Chicago and New York, and has participated in residencies including Caribbean Linked IV (Aruba) and the Vermont Studio Center (USA), after being awarded the Reed Foundation Fellowship.

[Simone Leid](#) is an International Development Consultant from Trinidad and Tobago and Founder of The WomenSpeak Project - a participatory knowledge-sharing forum which seeks to build the capacity of individuals, activists and organisations to improve

advocacy outcomes around issues of discrimination against women in the Caribbean. The WomenSpeak Project website: <http://womenspeakproject.org>

[Deborah McFee](#) is currently a PhD candidate at the McCormack Graduate School of Public Policy and Global Studies, Department of Conflict Resolution, Human Security, and Global Governance, University of Massachusetts Boston. Ms McFee has worked for the last sixteen years in the area of women, gender and development. Deborah holds a BA in History and Political Science from The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus, and an MA in the Politics of Alternative Development from the Institute of Social Studies, the Hague. Her experience includes research on the impact of small arms and light weapons on women and girls in select communities in Trinidad and Tobago, as well as exploring traditional gender norms as facilitators and products of emerging human security vulnerabilities experienced in Small Island Developing States in the Caribbean. Additionally, she has worked throughout the English speaking Caribbean developing national policies for gender equity and equality. Ms McFee has served as the Outreach and Research Officer at the Institute for Gender and Development Studies since 2007, prior to this she worked in the Gender Affairs Division of the Ministry of Culture and Gender Affairs. Ms McFee has lectured in the areas of Gender and Development and Women, Gender and Public Policy.

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[Tracy Robinson](#) is a Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Law, The University of the West Indies (UWI) Mona, Jamaica. Her research, publications and professional work have focused on issues of gender and sexuality, constitutionalism and human rights. She is a co-founder and co-coordinator of the Faculty of Law The UWI Rights Advocacy Project (U-RAP) with her colleague Arif Bulkan. She was a member of the Inter-American Commission (IACHR) between 2012 and 2015. She is currently a

Commissioner on the Independent Review of Equity and Health Inequalities in the Americas, initiated by PAHO/WHO in 2016.

[Tracie Rogers](#) is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Social Work, at the University of the Southern Caribbean. She is a PhD graduate of the University of the West Indies and holds a Masters degree from New York University. Her research interests include sexuality and youth development, gender-based violence and the psychosocial development of adolescent girls in Caribbean contexts. More specifically, she has a keen interest in the use of qualitative research methodologies for social justice, activism, policy development and empowering marginalized populations. She works with collaborative and arts based methodologies as well as youth-led participatory action research and autoethnography.

[Patricia L. Rosenfield](#), Senior Fellow, the Rockefeller Archive Center (RAC), is developing a series of activities to connect practitioners and scholars of philanthropy. From 2013-2015 Rosenfield directed the RAC Ford Foundation History Project to conduct research in the Foundation's archives and prepare reports and briefings on themes requested by new Foundation leadership. The project's final report is available on the RAC website (<http://rockarch.org/publications/ford/overview/FordFoundationHistory1936-2001.pdf>). The separate reports will be available on-line in 2018. Her current research interests include the history of foundation-funded fellowship programs and foundation support for interdisciplinary social science research.

Prior to joining the RAC, Rosenfield served on the program staff at Carnegie Corporation of New York, first as chair of the Strengthening Human Resources in Developing Countries Program (with activities in African and Caribbean countries, Mexico, and the United States) and then as director of the Carnegie Scholars Program. Earlier she served at the World Health Organization in Geneva, Switzerland, where she led a global program on social and economic research on tropical diseases and was a member of the program's research capacity strengthening team, providing graduate and post-graduate fellowships in medical and social sciences.

Rosenfield holds an A.B. cum laude from Bryn Mawr College, a Ph.D. from Johns Hopkins University, and an Honorary Doctorate in Social Sciences from Mahidol University, Thailand. Rosenfield has written extensively on the history, practice and ethics of philanthropy; interdisciplinary team science linking health and social scientists; and the social and economic aspects of tropical diseases. Rosenfield is co-editor with Frank Kessel and Norman Anderson of *Expanding the Boundaries of Health*

and Social Science (Oxford University Press, 2003), and an updated volume, *Interdisciplinary Research, Second Edition* (Oxford, 2008). She is also the author of the book, *A World of Giving: A Century of International Philanthropy at Carnegie Corporation of New York* (PublicAffairs, 2014).

[Michelle V. Rowley](#) is an Associate Professor in the Women's Studies Department at the University of Maryland. Before joining the University of Maryland in 2006 she served in the Women's Studies Department at the University of Cincinnati (2004-2006). She has also held a visiting appointment as a Benedict Distinguished Visiting Professor in the Women's and Gender Studies Program, Carleton College.

She has served on the editorial collective for *Feminist Studies* and is presently a member of the editorial board for *Expanding Frontiers* (University of Nebraska Press) and *Tout Moun: Caribbean Journal of Cultural Studies*. Her publications include "When the Post-Colonial State Bureaucratizes Gender: Charting Trinidadian Women's Centrality Within The Margins," "Where the Streets have no name: Getting Development out of the (RED)." "Rethinking Interdisciplinarity: Meditations on the Sacred Possibilities of an Erotic Feminist Pedagogy," and "Whose Time Is It?: Gender and Humanism in Contemporary Caribbean Feminist Advocacy." Her book is entitled *Feminist Advocacy and Gender Equity in the Anglophone Caribbean: Envisioning a Politics of Coalition* (Routledge, 2011). Her research interests address issues of gender and development, the politics of welfare, as well as state responses to questions of Caribbean women's reproductive health and well-being, and rights for sexual minorities. She is presently working on a manuscript that examines queer representations of home and becoming in the English-speaking Caribbean.

Her research interests address issues of gender and development, the politics of welfare, as well as state responses to questions of Caribbean women's reproductive health and well-being, and rights for sexual minorities.

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[Sheila Stuart](#) attained a BA (Hons.) degree in Sociology from the University of Reading, United Kingdom, and an MA in Caribbean Studies focusing on Women and Development, from the University of Warwick also in the United Kingdom.

Ms. Stuart has had a varied professional career in research and development, human rights, gender and development and social development, spanning some four decades. She had early careers as a journalist, as an Administrative Assistant and Research Fellow with the University of the West Indies Institute of Social and Economic Research (Now SALISES), Coordinator of the regional NGO Caribbean Rights; and Director of the Bureau of Gender Affairs, government of Barbados.

Ms Stuart recently retired from the United Nations Secretariat, where she was employed as a Social Development specialist at the Caribbean headquarters of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) based in the Trinidad. Ms. Stuart provided technical assistance, training in capacity building and policy advice to Caribbean governments in a number of areas, including gender and development, statistics, disability issues and population and development.

She has undertaken research and written a number of papers and articles on the Caribbean family, gender and development and social development issues.