

## ABSTRACT

### Entrepreneurialism, Dependency and Peripheralisation in Dairy and Fish Food Complexes in Trinidad: An Historical and Contemporary Gendered Analysis

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There is a dearth of research that investigates the gendered nature of the political economy of food in the Caribbean. This thesis is a historical and contemporary gendered analysis of the changing nature of power relations between the state, capital and food producers in two food complexes - dairy and fish - in the post-colonial state of Trinidad. The study is built around three key research questions. Firstly, what are the material and ideological relations of power between the state, capital and food producers in the dairy and fish complexes in Trinidad? Secondly, how are they mediated by relations of gender and, to a lesser extent, race, class, and, even age? Finally, how have these changed over time? Combining secondary historical and document analysis, with contemporary ethnographic research and 51 semi-structured interviews with fishers, farmers, processors, Ministry officials, experts, and activists, this multi-levelled analysis seeks a deeper gendered understanding of the different forms of power operating in each complex.

Ultimately, this thesis finds that notions of ‘entrepreneurship’, ‘dependency’, and ‘peripheralisation’ - that have roots in colonial and global capitalist power relations - are experienced and mobilised in multiple ways by distinctive gendered food-producing positionalities, both across and between gender in Trinidad. These different positionalities interact in unique ways with the neoliberalising yet paternalistic state and interactions between the two. It shows how changing patterns of global and local production have distinctly gendered and classed dynamics that differ in subtle ways across different food complexes. It concludes that those who seek to circumnavigate the Trinidadian state – i.e. commercial enterprises – and those who have traditionally been left out by the state – i.e. women – are more likely to espouse or be appropriated by neoliberal ideologies than those – such as the masculinised small producer – whose history has been characterised as a struggle between men, capital and the state.

Keywords: Merisa Thompson, Gender; Food; Power; dairy; fish; Trinidad and Tobago; Political Economy; Feminist Theory; Food Complexes; Caribbean.