



**The University of the West Indies
St. Augustine Campus
Faculty of Humanities and Education**

Caribbean Studies Project
HUMN 3099

Student Name: Geshan Narine
Student ID no.: 812006424
Degree Program: Bachelor of Arts Visual Arts (Special)
Supervisor: Dr. Travis Weekes

Title of Thesis:

**A Human Experience: Nurturing Masculine Empowerment - Earl Lovelace's
While Gods Are Falling**

Word count: 7212

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COURSE CODE – HUMN 3099

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

YHWH

This paper is dedicated to Deo Narine my father, who through kindness and determination gave his all to ensure a better upbringing for his children. Thank you for being a present father and my first curator. During my childhood I respected your fatherly sacrifices, and as an adult I appreciate your contribution as I experience the magnitude of manhood. Your lessons will remain dear to me until we meet in paradise. Gretta Narine my mother, and friend, I am deeply indebted to your unrelenting support and encouragement. Thank you for persisting in my dreams, while providing a stellar example of tenacity during unsure and trying circumstances.

Also, I am extremely grateful to Dr. Weekes for his willingness and patience to consider my discussion of nurturing masculine empowerment. I apologize for my inconsistency. The professional assistance, patience and consistent administrative support from the Caribbean Studies Section, Dr. Mc Collins and her team must also be praised for their services.

I express my deepest thanks to all the above, especially those whom I have failed to mention by name for your time and professional courtesies. Most importantly I thank the Almighty God for guiding me through stumbling blocks and over broken bridges to pursue my goals. You are ever present, YHWH above all.

ABSTRACT

Male empowerment is an evolving concept from a solely patriarchy ideal to an evolving diverse inclusive role. The concept of male empowerment in the western world has created social systems that are evolving forms of socio-psychological concepts that challenges the ideology of masculinity. In the Caribbean, the regression of males academically and economically is a cause for concern. Areas of leadership, availability of high-quality men, fatherhood and misguided hegemonic masculinity have affected the availability of quality role models for boys and children raised under matrifocal parenting that is prevalent in the Caribbean.

Developing young men should be viewed as an investment. Policy makers become more proactive in finding effective ways to recognize their talents, expertise, and provide them with agency to design programs for themselves. Communities also require more agency to provide social safe spaces, to procure talent and intelligent minds to move young men from the margins to the focal point as positive identities for its culture. There is need to address global events that have reshaped the man's role in society under progressive initiatives that are moving away from the patriarchal models to structures that promote inclusivity, diversity, and emotional accountability.

Key words: Empowerment, Leadership, Hegemonic Masculinity, Human Experience, Youth, Young Men, Youth Agency, Culture, Community

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INTRODUCTION

Developing an attitude that is acceptable to a pervasive society can be difficult for any person. Even more so for males that are required to aspire to leadership standards to ensure survivorship for themselves and their family. Earl Lovelace “While Gods Are Falling” provides a social construction to consider the degeneration of men as patriarchal - leadership figures in society. The story calls to account our human experiences and provide moral upliftment while we understand how our circumstances can change.

Trinidad and Tobago is a dynamic society that presents the perfect setting to be a social laboratory. The increased negative reflection of men, male and masculinity in the context of their roles in society prompted this research paper to consider the need for a redevelopment of the Caribbean male “youth”. This paper uses the term youth as defined by the National Youth Policy 2020 of Trinidad and Tobago, which states youth as between the age of 10 to 35. Youth is divided into five categories for statistical purposes: 10 to 14 years of age. (Middle Childhood to Adolescence/ Youth); 15 to 17 years (Adolescence/ Youth); 18 to 21 years (Adolescence/ Early adulthood/ Youth); 22 to 29 years (Early Adulthood/ Youth); and 30 to 35 years (Early Adulthood/ transitioning from youth).

The paper should influence change in practicing how boys are mentored and nurtured to men, by revising dominant pedagogies that promote misconceptions of hegemonic masculinities, that affect young men at personal, family and community levels. It also considers ways to development for marginalized youth to balance an unevenly hyper successful rate of men.

Thesis Statement – “Within the context of the Caribbean, it can be argued that social training for young men is neglected due to an allowance for perceived masculine hegemony which negatively impacts their development and creates a small group of hyper-successful men”.

The study examines young males between the ages of 10 to 35 years in Trinidad and Tobago to understand how their lack of social progression, (i.e., academic, communication) impacts roles within the family structure, community, and state. Limitations of the study does not examine parental styles across races that determine whether ethnic identity may factor into normative development of marginalised youth. Also, Trinidad and Tobago have a diverse ethnic composition and it would be incorrect to provide any accurate determination of a particular style of parenting in this era. There is insufficient data on migrant youth males in various communities, and their cultural adjustment to contributing member of society in this country. There was inadequate data on gender influence relating to same sex parenting and their influence on the development of young men in Trinidad. Also, there was limited data on the longitudinal effects of Trinbagonian children through development stages because of prohibited same sex parenting legislation in Trinidad and Tobago.

The research paper is primarily a literary study with aspects of social/local history describing masculine attentivity to social development in the Caribbean. Information was acquired through secondary documentary sources, to assimilate the accuracy of the hypothetical study. Chapter one deduces Earl Lovelace’s “While Gods Are Falling” social constructionism of marginalized young men in the 1960s and its relativity in the context of present-day concepts of masculinity. Chapter two provides an understanding of experiences that complicate male development with remedies to circumvent them. Chapter three wraps up the discussion with alternative methods to nurturing masculine empowerment.

CHAPTER ONE

While *Gods are Falling* examines the struggles of a lower middle-class male and his struggles of balancing family life in a marginalised community. The experiences of the story's protagonist Walter, in describes the plight of lower middle-class citizens in Trinidad and Tobago. Walter laments over the state of his community and questions the magnitude of his disparity, depravity, and lack of morality to guide the citizens. His inquisition about the degenerative state of his community leads to a self-examination of his manhood, and whether he is a by-product of his environment.

Lovelace's narrative of Walter's conflict sheds light on the internal struggles men faces and the practical rationales used to solve the self-actualisation of manhood. How does a young man begin this journey of self-discovery to change self and a culture that ignores the adequate development of a man? Walter says, "*a man must start somewhere, sometime. You can't just keep crawlin' around trying, slaving, just to stay alive so you can pay the rent and quiet the worms inside you*". This statement is indicative that a minimum wage state job to maintain a status quo of employment and meet one's basic needs is insufficient. A drastic social change is required that centers around developing purposeful living.

Lovelace questions the meaning of life, finding purpose and fulfillment. He questions the benefits of work and its purpose for servitude only or the means to facilitate one's existence. In Walter his introspection provides us an understanding of how major events in your past can influence your present predicament and thinking. The first was observing his father live with depression after an accident maimed him, along with his mother's resignation to servitude instead of living. This solemnness affected the mood of the household when his father's ability to provide

diminished. Walter blamed his father's irresponsibility, as a married man leading an immoral lifestyle with poor financial management, and for the despair his family endured. Although, later through personal experiences he would fully reconcile his father's actions with the ills of youth and experiencing adulthood.

Coincidentally, his father provided the most profound concept of being a man, when he stated, "*A man is the greatest thing in God's earth, and a man is the weakest thing in God's earth. You learn to turn around and laugh at yourself. You shouldn't stake yourself too seriously. You are little and weak, you afraid and you get angry. And you should not hold yourself too casually because you're a man.*" Appreciating the dualities of being a man, where you are both strong and weak. Our intellectual capacity places us at a conscious level above other animals whereby we can modify our environment and theirs to suite our needs as apex beings. This selfish notion is also our weakness because it results in reckless decisions that negatively affect our personal lives and others. Having balance is important and one must be mindful of their actions and account for them. Don't allow your mistakes to define you, sometimes we need to laugh at ourselves and move on. Therefore, it is imperative for men to get over the illusion of a Godhood entitlement, especially as beings who suffer from chronic despair.

Later in Walter's young adult life, he experienced the gravity of desperation while unemployed. This experience brought him to a low and made him question his path for independence. The feeling did not alleviate when he found a job, because his wages and treatment by his employer did not make his situation much better. At this point, he began to understand that intellect was most important for him to navigate through a system that facilitates unequal distribution of resources.

Young men in marginalized communities are exceedingly frustrated by these inequalities, since it appears like constructs to suppress their development. Walter considers the management of this restlessness imperative to preventing indifference, idleness, and regressed development, as he reflected on his two years living in Nuggle.

What defines a man? Is it his material possessions or is it his character, what he has inside? Walter in conversation with Stephanie idealized the notion that a man is what he has inside him, and not his material possessions. Stephanie's counter argument explained that people would only consider you unless you have something outside to show. Most humans judge from what is easiest to analyze, that is visuals. Material possessions are used as a simple gauge to determine a man's industry to ascribe respect and status to the individual. Subsequently, even if a man is indifferent to the social grade with possessions, he would still have to fight a battle that he is indifferent too or by rules he doesn't know about.

To win a battle without resources a young man without must use intellect, that is made up of both street and book smarts or master one with an idea of the other. Walter's friend Saga's idea of managing his position to avoid being railroaded by men at the upper stratus of a marginalized society was to use your brains. However, intelligence needs to be used properly or else people will lose respect for you. To gain respect a man must fight to protect his own or else people will walk over you. Finding the right team or a companion is essential to this aspect of developing his knowledge base and social acumen. If a man can find someone to guide and understand his battles, it would make his ideals more purposeful, because when the fight is alone and there is no one to share it with, achievements mean nothing.

Walter's brother Andrew who proved to be his main antagonist, during his reconciliation with Walter, echoed the sentiments of a man walking his own path, and after accepting

companionship. Andrew exclaimed, “*each man begins with his own ideas about how things should be. They might be wrong, but they are his own ideas.*” His life philosophy is not set in stone because he is not God, but also understanding that he must have someone to share and help shape his ideas. As social animals we cannot exist solely in an existential state of omnipotence, we need family and relationships to belong too. We learn from each other and though we differ it is our obligation to develop our mindset to appreciate, understand and manage these oddities.

Another interesting point Andrew highlighted are the miscommunications in these social settings that create misunderstanding, specifically between young males and their mentors or figureheads. Identifying where the issues arise are important to having a proper rapport between both parties. For example, an adult can be hard on a young boy, because they are themselves fighting internal conflicts and are trying to make up for something they never received or loss.

Changing a person is improbable, but to effect growth and minimize arrested development, appropriate elements must be injected in their immediate environment to prompt a responsible shift in their consciousness. The elements are giving them purpose in life, a worthy goal that allows them a fifty - fifty chance to achieve it. This purpose and goal achievements are constructed from their understanding, evaluating their concerns, and demonstrating how plausible it is to achieve with their circumstances.

A conundrum arises for tailoring goals for young men in marginalized communities. Walter acknowledged this issue and contemplated the following concerns:

“What goal can you give a young criminal, a young delinquent who has nothing, who has the whole big world against him, squeezing him, pushing him, telling him to move on; with

the whole police force geared to fight him, with the whole lot of citizens watching for him to make a false move? What laws can you ask him to accept when you hold no law dear?"

Role models and a lack thereof correlate with high crime levels. The onus is on the marginalised communities to find resources, create programmes, and make changes on their own. This may sound disadvantageous to persons who do not have anything, but we must remember where our most precious commodities developed in Trinidad and Tobago. The land gave us asphalt and oil, from the lower class the bongo, limbo, calypso, soca, chutney and the Steelband.

To extract these elements the community must search within and find resources to create opportunities for their young men. Now the family structure becomes important, and within this system inclusivity should be at all stages of a child's development to prevent them from growing away. Paying special attention to single parent families, where boys raised by single parents, especially by mothers only, are more susceptible to seeking mentors in their peers or the streets and falling into criminal activity. Ms Walls lamented, *"is hell when a woman don't have a man to help she raise she children. Is hell when a woman don't have so small an' so poor she can't fight the town, can't prevent she boy-child roamin' out with gangs. Is only trouble they could meet."*

The development of young men was ignored for years in our society. Offering free programmes are not the only means to detract them away from the streets. The elements that create culture in our lower class, must now be the engineer to create a formula for a winning man in a contemporary system that appears to demerit their existence.

CHAPTER TWO

Overview

This chapter considers the social constructs that nurture young men, marginalised youth, and analyse aspects that contribute to their disenfranchisement from society. Understanding experiences that complicate male development are explored under five points: education, youth marginalization, risky behaviour, mental health, and family structures and community social networks.

Chapter one elucidated Lovelace social constructionism of the challenges affecting the development of young men in the 1960s residing in rural and urban impoverished marginalised communities. The underlying issues of race, class, and place affected the comprehension of gender development and male progression during the context of a country realizing its independence. Following this achievement attempts by the State and other social institutions are attempting to curb the decline. However, these three social issues persist and can be posited under five areas where male youths tend to falter or are neglected: education, risky behaviour, youth marginalization, mental health, and family structures and community social networks.

Miller 2003 describes the Caribbean as the closest approximation of social laboratory that can be found in nature. Trinidad's multifaceted developing social construct allows for aspects from international and regional studies to be consider this discussion and the application of concepts that align with human nature. These issues are analyzed through self and peer assessment with research from international communities with similar context.

Education

There are many narratives to discuss the underperformance of males in all tiers of the education system as compared to girls. This part of the study will discuss the comparative history of educating males in the Caribbean, learning attitudes, and systems which facilitate their learning. The history of teaching in the Commonwealth Caribbean was capsulated by Miller (2003), where he identified that teaching included more women than men to neutralize the potential development of a militant group elected by Black men. For example, the Great Jamaican Slave Revolt of 1831–

32, which incurred the deaths of approximately 500 slaves in the colony of Jamaica, and prior the Haitian Revolution. The notion was to keep black men as a source of cheap labor in the productive sector, mainly agriculture. Reduce the cost of the teaching service by offering low salaries given to women and to afford black women the status of social equals and not black men.

Moral considerations were given to shift the gender composition of the teaching force from male to female. Miller (2003) also posited that the state's major concern was supplying males to the labor force for the sugar plantation and biding any political threat of educated black males. Furthermore, "*the feminization of public elementary school teaching after 1838 and the end of the 19th century was an attempt to manage conflict between dominant and subordinate groups with respect to political, economic, and social advantage in society and shifts in alliances between groups in relation to that contest in different time periods,*" (Miller 2003). Concerns were also given to the control of upward mobility by the dominant groups of the state.

For years the adage of "boys will be boys" and allowances for them to persist in nonchalant learning attitudes have stagnated male progression and hampered with addressing the issue. Misconceptions of "separating boys from girls because girls cause distractions" and using same sex educational institutions to improve performances have also fallen short of its intended purposes. Pedagogies focus on understanding the triggers of males' insouciant behaviours towards schoolwork and hegemonic attitudes¹ they fall prey to, can assist with developing proper strategies to curb their decline. Morris (2012) notes that observing recalcitrant behaviour of boys from trouble environments and interpret what purpose such behaviour serves, provide alternative means

¹ Hegemonic masculinity are characteristics that include strength, competitiveness, assertiveness, confidence, and independence. Being gentle, compassionate, emotional, and dependent, for example are characteristics of hegemonic femininity. Hegemonic masculinity is defined as a practice that legitimizes men's dominant position in society and justifies the subordination of the common male population and women, and other marginalized ways of being a man (Morris 2012).

of expression that do not further distance them from school. Addressing racial discrimination and place stigmatization that resign youth of African or mixed ethnicities to their commitment towards education. Qualified guidance counselors, which are underutilized in the school system, can be used to encourage depressed boys to discuss their feelings in secure spaces.

Educators can reduce emphasis on manhood as one-dimensionally dominant and consider alternatives embodies balance and emotional intelligence. Commend students for their application during the learning process and on areas in their intellectual growth. Statements such as “he is intelligent but lazy” only emboldens young men to avoid putting in the necessary effort to improve academically (Morris 2003). Also, policy makers need to question the opportunities provided for the young men besides, rigid ideals of manhood, incarceration, unemployment, economic disadvantages, and marginalization.

“From the bosom of the peasant the bongo and the limbo have come, and a wealth of song; from the Tesses the calypso and the Steelband,” (Lovelace, 1965). Marginalised communities contributed immensely to framing the culture of Trinidad and Tobago. As such, learning institutions in these areas should investment in a diverse form of education. For marginalized communities and disadvantaged public schools, investing in a much stronger performing and visual arts programs that facilitates large and consistent community events can provide a paradigm shift in pedagogies for these youth. Steel bands were essential to creating community identity in the 1960s and generated our sense of independence during our colonial years. Students, schools, and neighborhoods can benefit from potential community building and diverse gender expressions that arts can offer (Morris 2012).

Risky Behaviour

It takes great fortitude to captain your soul through a storm of circumstances that can shipwreck your life. For youths in disadvantaged communities, joblessness, early sexual initiation, risky sexual behaviours, substance abuse and crime, are circumstances which create storms within the home. These arduous circumstances are caused by personal choices, family negligence and external socioeconomic factors.

For instance, schools with dangerous environments and overwhelmed teachers would be less likely to connect with students than safe schools with a caring staff. Feeling disconnected from a learning environment can cause youths to engage in risky behaviours. Connected to this are social exclusion and abusive home environments, as discussed in the next section, that can degenerate a youth into negative behaviours. The wider fall out from this scenario of leaving school without learning is the disadvantaged position these youths are now placed in relation to their peers globally (Cunningham et al, 2008).

Consequently, risky behaviours can be costly to both youth and the country, where additional investments are needed to curtail the decline of a nation's human development. As such, stakeholders are challenged with investing in rehabilitation projects some of which exacerbates the problem. Cunningham et al, (2008) identifies this major issue in Latin American and Caribbean countries in some areas where publicly funded programs are proving to be ineffective:

- Get-tough strategies including youth incarceration, trying youth in adult courts, and placing them in adult criminal institutions increase delinquency.

- Gun amnesty, zero tolerance or shock programs, boot camps increase, that increase delinquent and criminal behaviour.
- Unrefined traditional publicly funded vocational education courses that are incongruent with technological advancements and modern techniques.

However, developmental programs for disadvantaged youth should not be abandoned or created in silos. Cunningham et al, (2008), proposes to treat the youth portfolio as an investment and design it accordingly. Reallocating resources to programs that have a positive effect by nipping issues in the bud, with programs for preventing risky behaviour at birth and niche programs for separate offenders, for example:

- Community in action champion counselling practices, coupled with programs for at-risk youth who need second chances because of individual misjudgment, family decisions and behaviour, market failures, or failure by policy makers to deliver basic services (Cunningham et al, 2008, Mantovani et al 2017).
- Target those at risk of poverty in rural residences, urban house planings, and 2nd chance school dropouts. The key is progressing human development rather than punishment (Cunningham et al, 2008).

Families, Communities, Non-Government Organizations, Local Institutions, the private sector, and young men should be committed to minimize the occurrences of risky behaviours. These actors' participation is integral to the success of these projects. Essentially, creating more safe spaces and peaceful environment with nurturing protective factors, such as caring parents, schooling connection, youth inclusivity. Do so will minimize risk factors, like social exclusion,

marginalization, and negative homes, thus ensuring an increase in youth productivity (Cunningham et al. 2008; Schlak, 2020).

Youth Marginalization

Young men who feel included as a member of the community, have wholesome friendships, and do not feel neglected or isolated are less likely to engage in risky behaviour. Conversely, youth marginalisation occurs when young men are ignored as a distinct social demographic with specific rights but treated as a group that is in transition between childhood and adulthood (Powers et al. 2018).

Exclusion from contributing to policy making and being ostracised by society because of age, gender, and disabilities creates disenfranchisement with their national cultural identity. Stakeholders must consider the developing consciousness of youth within a global framework and the increasing number of persons living with disabilities. Emphasis is placed on ensuring their rights of the youth and afford them equal opportunities in society, barring any differences. Youth with disabilities are often ostracised from society; therefore, the youth development framework must include youth in a meaningful and consistent manner in all aspects of society to promote conditions for inclusiveness and participation (National Youth Policy 2020).

Notwithstanding homeless youth who require special attention. They are the ones often misunderstood and negatively judged by society. Homeless youth experience histories of physical and sexual abuse, neglect, and trauma (Ferguson et al. 2010). Consequently, these experiences are

sometimes exacerbated and continued when they attempt to seek independence on the streets and in subsequent relationships. It is also imperative that law enforcement be trained in the legal rights afforded to young people under the Children's Authority Act, international human rights law, and national law to prevent and ensure accountability for youth abuse by law enforcement and other persons (Powers et al. 2018).

Moving forward stakeholders must ensure youth engagement through a monitoring and evaluation framework, which includes existing human rights mechanisms, treaties, etcetera, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (National Youth Policy 2020; Powers et al. 2018).

Furthermore, inclusivity must spread through Caricom nations to ensure networking and improve the lives of marginalized young people, including those living with HIV/AIDS, and mental health issues, assess their needs and produce more effective and efficient policies (Powers et al. 2018).

Mental Health

The World Health Organisation conceptualise good mental health as related to mental and psychological well-being. Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel and act. It also helps determine how we manage stress, related

to others, and make choices. Mental Health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood (WHO 2020).

There are various forms of mental (ill) health, but for purposes of this paper we will consider occurrences that young men experience, as highlighted in Lovelace's reading. Usually, when all is going fine, life bowls us a couple doosras² that discombobulate our guard and destroys our wicket. A maiming accident, loss of a loved one, joblessness, substance abuse, academic achievements, failing to get a promotion, are occurrences that negatively affect our emotional state.

Lovelace aptly captured the emotional state of his characters during their distresses and mirrored the mental state of a suffering person. The experiences can cause low self-esteem, which is a risk factor for depression, suicidal behaviour, bullied and eating disorders. Griffith (2003) recommends that good personal support networks such as friendship or a confiding relationship protect mental health and enable people to recover from stressful life events like bereavement or financial problems. Lovelace's Walter found this support in his wife, who was kind and patient in trying to understand him and their rapports provided him enlightenment. This was only possible because he expressed himself.

Griffith (2003) further advise that active participation in user groups and social support has a wide range of benefits, it reduces death rates, susceptibility to infection and depression. People with a small primary support group, three people or fewer, are at the greatest risk of mental health problems. The idea is not confiding in everyone, but when in trouble it is best for someone to find

² A doosra is a bowling delivery used in the sport of cricket which an off spinner uses to spin the ball in the opposite direction to his normal stock delivery. To a right-handed batsman, a normal off-break would spin from offside to the leg side and *into* the batsman. Trying not to change their action, a doosra would instead spin from the leg side to the offside and *away* from a right-handed batsman. Invented by Pakistan bowler Saqlain Mushtaq during their 1999-2000 tour of Australia. Pakistan wicketkeeper Moin Khan is credited with using the word from behind the stumps when he urged his team-mate to "bowl the doosra" which means '(the) second (one)', or '(the) other (one)' in Hindustani (Cricket Mastery 2022; Economic Times 2022).

a responsible support group. It is intriguing that Walter was able to speak his concerns to so many persons without becoming too personal with the wrong person. For each of his problems, Walter had a person to consider his plea or provide quaint reasoning, with his wife keeping his ego inflicted issues in check.

Why do men suffer in silence? Young men tend to avoid dealing with mental health issues, low self-esteem, depression, social exclusion, due to cultural stigmas. Our predominant hegemonic masculine culture promotes strength in silence and avoidance, which becomes toxic when it prevents persons in need from reaching out for the right help. Evidently, each person employs different coping mechanisms, and this reading does not prescribe a specific course of action. However, encouraging young men to use their words is an empowering aspect for youths to engage their issues with relatives and persons close to them.

During my adolescence and early adulthood, I was mostly reclusive and as many young men prided myself in taking on my own problems. A couple doosras later, financial instability, etc., my reclusiveness increased as I grappled with working out issues that were beyond me. It was so bad that my mother hid my exercise ropes as a precaution. I was not inclined to suicide, but the effect my silence had, concerned my family immensely. Eventually, my concerns were cared for in stages with my family, friends and spiritually by elders from my place of worship.

Having a wholesome support group, that provides a protective space to build emotional intelligence is pertinent for building young men to deal with social pressures that can derail their lives. It is difficult to express concerns, especially when what you are feeling is had to put into words. To analyse why Caribbean men neglect seeking medical assistance for mental (ill) health more research is required. Thus, as a counter measure to cultural stigmas, psychological services should be decentralisation, especially to disadvantaged communities, and ensure that young men

have the pertinent information required to access the available services (Griffith 2003; Keating 2009).

In the Caribbean heterogeneity in black and Indo ethnic groups contains complex demography of dynamic identities and practices. Developing a competent workforce that incorporates ideal cultural comprehension instead of solely international remedies, that is, dietary, spirituality, and education. Creating safe spaces to express emotional distress, that are non-stigmatizing to understand life experiences: sources of oppression and to tease out overlaps between “race”, ethnicity, culture, age, class, gender, (dis)ability, religion, and sexuality (Keating 2009).

Maharajh and Ali (2004), advised to home in on planning and delivery of mental health services in Trinidad and Tobago, by having a clear focus and vision, supported with an efficient legal machinery and a willingness on the part of government to invest in a rolling programme of service improvement. Patients’ rights and regard for the individual’s autonomy are imperative. Although state applications are essential, micro engagements with families and macro community social networks are required to address this and other pervasive issues hindering youth development in Trinidad and Tobago.

Family Structures and Community Social Networks

Family structures are important in our modern society to ensure the health and well-being of all members of the family. They are crucial to providing shelter and safety from problems that are associated with being alone in society. The environment in which children are nurtured determines their proper development. The family structure is designed to be the first, financial and

emotional, support system within a society. To make any social adjustments within our modern society most socio-psychological practices target firstly the family and then communities as the changing points.

The efficacy of developing young men is determined by the said sex, which is young men require proper role modelling to become functional members of society. Studies show the probability of young men success increasing when there is a proper father³ figure input. Sarkadi et al. (2007), concurred the effects of a fathers' engagement that differentially influences desirable outcomes. Furthermore, father engagement reduces the frequency of behavioural problems in boys and psychological problems in young women. Even single fathers' high motivation, commitment to parenthood, and internal resilience or a combination also enhances cognitive development while decreasing criminality and economic disadvantages in low-income families (Sarkadi et al. 2007; Carone et al. 2020).

Additionally, Sarkadi et al. (2007) posited that a father's involvement contributes to less aggressive behaviour in young men. The review also shows that less engaged fathers during a boy's preschool years contributed to behaviour problems. High father *engagement* in poor families, with stable marriages, predicted lower incidence of delinquency during the early adult years for both sexes (Sarkadi et al. 2007). Notwithstanding, the influence of matrifocal parenting families, where women combine caretaking, housework, and breadwinning, yet men are still involved in their lives (Goldberg and Allen 2007).

The importance of fatherhood is emphasized in this part of the discussion for young men, who are sons and fathers, because it is very much marginalized in Trinbago culture. Understanding

³ Father includes biological fathers and father figures, which can be identified as stepfathers or as men cohabiting with the child's mother.

the importance of the responsibilities of parenting for young men is quintessential for considerations to marriage and fatherhood. Schwartz (2006) claims, in the context of parenthood, young men involvement tend to decrease time spent with and the importance of peers, insulating men from situations where risk taking, and violent behaviours are more prevalent.

Equally, in the absence of family centred men, young men are prone to hegemonic aggressive tendencies to emulate “manliness” among peers (Schwartz 2006; Morris 2012). Also, an increased care burden occurs when there are low level of husbands, fathers, and potential mates in an area, this intensified strain on matrifocal parenting elevates female aggression (Schwartz 2006; Goldberg and Allen 2007). Schwartz also asserts the availability of high quality employed men and not just an availability of unmarried men, sex ratios, buffers communities from homicide offences.

This focus does not indicate that living in a two parent home lowers one’s risk of creating criminal offences, it is a social buffer to dampen violence in an area. Conversely, elevated levels of teen childbearing, increase rates of violence because of the stresses and strains of single and young parenthood in a context typified by low social capital (Schwartz, 2006). Incidentally, community economic disadvantages indirectly elevate violence via its effect on the family formations and dissolution. Hence, what role does the community play in assisting a male’s development in the absence of a nonconventional nuclear family?

The adage, “it takes a village to raise a child,” it is an essential role of a community to provide an environment that promotes a focal point for belonging and identity. Ideally it should support active participation in the world, continuity of learning as a focal point that connects families to supportive relationship resource networks.

Morris (2012) encouraged a participatory culture for adult involvement in children affairs. Participation includes creating a positive culture that the community is known for. Marginalised communities have developed negative connotations due to societal misconceptions, political and economic failures. A change in basic assumptions needs to occur to a place where sports, the arts, spirituality, and academics become a ritual. For example, the Ministry of Education, Non-for profit and Non-Government Funded Organisations can invest into stronger performing and visual arts programs in disadvantaged schools can support larger and more regular community events (Morris 2012).

Lovelace conceptualized a human as more than a complex animal; a divine being crowned as a beautiful and sacred achievement. Within the context of developing disadvantaged young men from a community level, we need to realize better alternatives through more problem solving. Communities require more agency for leaders to take notice and be accountable for their own actions. Giving communities agency does not mean giving power to “community leaders”, gangs, increasing police presence, and so on. Rather simply provide knowledge-based platforms encouraging persons to hold themselves accountable for their own wellbeing. The citizenry acts as the recruiting force, bringing the talents residing on the margins to the center, identifying what this place represents (Schlak, 2020).

Libraries are intellectual shrines which provide opportunities for intriguing minds to merge and grow a knowledge base realizing Lovelace concept of human beings. Schlak (2020) admonishes for an activist community-centred library as the vector for citizenship to gather and explore new ways of thinking. The role of our leaders is to create structures and experiences that bring citizens, specifically young adults, to identify and solve their problems (Narayan and

Glinskaya, 2007; Schlak, 2020; Ferguson, et al. 2010). For instance: a community council can prompt local government to enact a “Responsible Fatherhood Program” (Markowitz and Ryan, 2016), upon the realisation of increased absenteeism by young men at a community level, as opposed to repeated incarcerations. Additionally, Fatherhood programmes would make policy makers aware of the impact of family disruption on parental monitoring and focus on maintaining elevated levels of involvement throughout the supportive period, primarily at early childhood (Markowitz and Ryan 2016).

CHAPTER THREE

Overview

Chapter three concludes the analysis of Lovelace social construct on the broken concept of patriarchal masculine figures, and the need to nurture young men residing in disadvantaged communities. Chapter two considered experiences that complicate male development and preventative measures to address it. Nurturing masculine empowerment concludes under the themes of networking, developing leadership through social responsibility, functioning as individuals and in groups; and creating purpose in social constructs.

Networking and the potential of social media

The technological age affords us the privilege of accessing information and communities from any corner of the world by the click of a button. Our country's economical position has afforded most citizenry with the availability of devices to access a variety of social media networks available to partake in multiple cultural connections. For our youth to be competitive with their peers around the world, functional social networks should be available to facilitate constructive narratives for a young man's development through media and social networks.

Today's popular social media outlets are Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Wikipedia, Instagram, and Snapchat. They afford users to form individual profiles, create, share content, and messages by connecting with others in the social network, which is constantly in a state of change so that new or enhanced features are developing to meet the demands (Nurten, et al. 2020).

Social media has attracted professionals from academic fields by becoming a special platform for facilitating knowledge sharing besides only communication. During the Covid 19 pandemic social media has become medium for navigating educational restrictions. Students have found social media valuable for facilitating communication with their friends and lecturers in courses. Social media is the preferred option to discussions through technology over face-to-face discussions performed in traditional classrooms.

The drawbacks associated with social media were related to reduced participation in a virtual environment for lack of interest, avoiding sharing ideas or writing through the internet because of introversion, unwillingness to participate in the activities performed in a virtual

environment and inadequate internet access that prevented students from using the forum. Also, it is costly to maintain, uncertainty of platforms bandwidth that surge and plummet quickly. As such, it would be imperative for institutions to develop either their platforms or to subscribe for one for its use and updates at an institutional level (Nurten, et al. 2020). There is also the mismanagement of these resources to bully peers with black mail images or disrupt classes with spamming messages.

Social media can also promote healthy lifestyles among young men through the stages of middle childhood to early adulthood transitioning from youth. Health and Education policy makers can consider an App which provides constant, immediate, and effortless 24/7 access for the promotion of health and physical activity information and messages (Goodyear and Armour, 2019). Social media suits young people as it is design to reflect their every ready lifestyle. Thus, social media has enormous potential as a health-related learning-tool.

Include young men in developing programs that would suit their lifestyle in designing or co-designing initiatives, support, practices, and policies. The value of young people has been underutilised in a country that lack inadequate succession planning and sharing knowledge to marginalised communities. We need to find effective ways to recognise their expertise, capacity to conceptualise a product that is culturally applicable, and agency to hone responsibility of their products.

Developing leadership through social responsibility

Providing effective ways to increase leadership potential in marginalised young men by delegating social responsibilities through community care programs to develop leadership, ingenuity and staking ownership of their identity. Leadership through community care programs that encourages young men to understand their social responsibility to their community.

Too often young men are taught negative hegemony ideals about their role in the community, via media, gangs, and misguided peers. Non-Government Organisations and religious bodies have attempted to engage young men to resign these misconceptions. An aggressively committed Community Care program that takes young men from street corners to creative connoisseurs, to provide a different concept to community social services. This type of program can be a use by state agencies and co-funded by the private sector who through participation can benefit from tax concessions.

Community Care programs may include mentorships in construction engineering, public speaking, teaching, health care, information technology, building, and repairing homes for the elderly. Also, sports, arts and culture community events are avenues for collaboration with peers and adults which improved learning in youths (Wang et al. 2013). There as extensive probabilities for developing functional young men in society, the onus is on us to present constructive opportunities and deter negative prospective.

Functioning as individuals and in groups

Teamwork is an important skill for employability, also are critical thinking, communication, adaptability, honesty, integrity, ability to deal with pressure, etcetera (Abbas and Sağsan, 2019). It is essential for young men to possess these attributes and should include training them to function as individuals and in groups in any setting.

In their test on gender in group work process of college students Takeda and Homberg (2014) theorised boys, compared to girls, as being prone to underperformance in all-male groups and reduced collaborative behaviours by solo males in male gender exception groups i.e., groups consisting of one male student and other members being female. Furthermore, students peer assessment lowly rated, more commonly, male students as being uncommitted social loafers. Although, this study is subject to social assimilation variables, it aligns with other claims about boys' underperformance as mentioned in chapter 2.

Therefore, at the individual level, young men learn to identify their own strengths, learn skills, and find resources to develop better application characteristics (Daniels et al. 2011). Also, group training should provide support for healthy behaviour that resign unnecessary hegemonic masculinities and ambivalence.

Creating purpose in social constructs

Creating purpose through social constructs in family life, spirituality, and community development is the final aspect of masculine empowerment. Family life as mentioned above, within the context of a man's importance to nuclear and single parent families. However, operating in a silo is difficult, Lovelace stated "*when a man doesn't belong, when he has to fight alone, achievements don't mean a thing.*" Therefore, it is beneficial for a man to have someone to share his legacy, siblings, love interest, children, distant relatives, or someone in your neighbourhood.

Trinidad and Tobago's complex demography and the range of practices it contains does not allow one to ascribe a specific medium of creating purpose spiritually (Keating, 2009). Therefore, this aspect of development corresponds with being able to find something bigger than oneself. Lovelace, "*The problem is the individual approach. We must find something to look up to. Something outside of self, something bigger than self.... There is no escape for a man within himself.*"

Creating purpose through community development involves changing the social narrative of your environment. If the area is stigmatised for gang activity and violence, be the person that makes the environment synonymous with his talent. Thus, for stigmatized youth to be academically successful they need to embed an identity of academic achievement into their racial identity: Being a mixed (Afro/Indo) youth from Troumacaque Road, Laventille could be consistent with being academically successful.

CONCLUSION

The concept of “Nurturing Masculine Empowerment” surpasses 20th century hegemonic masculine ideals. It contains a balanced view of what requires a man’s development, while noticing his in/actions affect immediate environments. Three underlying factors that sum up the issue of male empowerment concerns race, class, and place. Trinidad and Tobago’s dynamic ethnic composition makes it difficult to quantify how ethnic nurturing affects masculinity and male development. Therefore, other factors approximated class and place: education, risky behaviour, youth marginalisation, mental health, family structures and community social networks.

These above factors highlighted the areas men have digressed in the context of social development. However, each issue also sparked ideas for persons to become productive members of society. Contemporary alternatives improve young men’s development in Trinidad and Tobago primarily: investments, inclusivity, and agency to create beneficial systems reflecting their lifestyle. It is important to place young men away from the margins of society, encouraging them to appreciate the benefits of applying themselves, and the value they can provide in their communities. Finally, one must understand that accountability puts you in position to appreciate the grace others. Most importantly it gives you the prime option to dictate what purpose your life will fulfil.

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