"She Look For It":
Young Men, Community Violence, and Gender in Urban Trinidad

Dylan Kerrigan

Abstract

This article explores the relationships between masculinity and violence at a number of scales: domestic and household through to transnational drug trafficking. It thinks through the ways in which masculinity is expressed and transmitted through an innovative form of intervention with youth, around using spoken word workshops that ran over 15 consecutive weeks in 2017. The article concentrates on the discourses and language-in-use shared by the young men in the workshops around issues of men and violence, women and violence, and gender-based violence. The article connects the answers provided by participants to literature in the field, to explore the implications of how these young men in Trinidad understand what it means to be a man today.

Context of Study

In the twin-island nation-state of Trinidad and Tobago, population 1.34 million, January 2018 was the most murderous month ever recorded, with 60 murders taking place. This was eight more than the 52 murders the previous year in January 2017 and three more than the previous monthly high of June 2008 when there were 57 murders. Figures available for the gender of murder victims for the year 2016 suggest that men, at 88 percent of the total 458 murder victims in 2016, are most likely to be murder victims. In the context of domestic violence, figures from the Crime and Problem Analysis (CAPA) branch of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS) note that between 2010 and 2015 the police received 11,441 reports of domestic violence incidents. Of that total number of reports, nearly 75 percent came from or were related to females. During the same period

there were 131 domestic violence related deaths, of which 56 percent were female. This suggests that men, too, are murder victims of domestic violence. Data from the TTPS and the National Domestic Violence Hotline reveal, however, that approximately 80 percent of the calls received by the Hotline related to female victims.

Caribbean criminologist, Randy Seepersad, has described crime in Trinidad and Tobago, particularly since 2000, as one of the leading problems in the local society and "one of the most important threats to public safety" (Seepersad 2016: 14). A United Nations Development Programme report in 2012 on violence and insecurity in Trinidad and Tobago noted the rising violence rate, "with an increase in the homicide rate from 20 per 100,000 to 50 per 100,000 in the past 20 years" (UNDP 2012). In 2013 (UNODC 2012),[1] Trinidad and Tobago was identified as one of the 20 most murderous nations in the world. On the reason why there had been such an increase in violence rates over the last 20 years, the UNDP report pointed to "a correlation between gangs, guns and illegal drugs as the primary causal factor behind the high rates of murder and other violent crimes in T&T" (UNDP 2012: 10).

The identification of guns and illegal drugs by researchers as a predominant element in the high rates of violent crime (Bowling 2011) in a country that does not manufacture guns and does not have a high level of drug consumption (UNODC 2012) suggests a link between the micro realities on the ground in some geographical areas of Trinidad and Tobago, and the macro realities of transnational organised crime. For example, Townsend (2009) describes how Port of Spain, the capital city, has become since the mid-1990s an important transshipment point in the illegal transnational drug trade, not least because Trinidad is less than seven miles from the South American mainland and, as a global energy exporter, has key sea and air communication routes to North America, Europe and Africa (Reichel and Randa 2018).

As part of a larger research project on the impact of transnational organised crime and drug trafficking on poor urban communities of Port of Spain, a team of academic researchers and local facilitators developed a multi-layered, 18-month research project, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), in order to better understand the risks and impact of transnational

organised crime on populations, economy, culture and security in the twin-island nation-state. In particular, we wanted to consider how the *transnational-to-community* impact of international drug-trafficking might play out in, and leave marks on, the individual lives of young men and women in urban Port of Spain, an area marked by high rates of violence.[2] Our central research hypothesis was connected to the idea that transnational drug trafficking, having flowed through Trinidad since at least the 1980s (Townsend 2009), has influenced and shaped lives in vulnerable communities around Port of Spain. The residual impact of transnational organised crime can be seen across various levels. For example, the impact of increased flows of firearms, which arrive with the transnational drug trade, and then are hard to remove from communities, means that over time, this technological change from knives and bottles to guns and high-powered weaponry has produced violent and murderous upswings locally. In this article we develop insights into the micro level of young males' everyday experiences of gender, gender roles, and the connection between local forms of masculine identities and forms of men's violence. Most specifically, we are interested in how local masculinities are imagined in urban Trinidad amongst young men who live in communities marked by violence associated with transnational organised crime. Where do these young men see violence happen? Who do they blame for the violence they see and experience? Why do they think violence happens? How do they speak about and understand gender-based violence? This article documents some of what we learnt from the young men we worked with. What is at stake, then, based on our findings, are the effects of international drug trafficking and the violence it engenders, and how to read these (and their gendered dimensions) at the community level.

Gender-Based Violence in Trinidad and Tobago

International organisations like the World Bank recently classified Trinidad and Tobago as "a high-income developing nation" and noted that the status of women in the country "compares favourably with many middle-income developing nations" (Commonwealth Secretariat 2016). Trinidad and Tobago is also recognised as having achieved "universal primary education and gender parity in primary and secondary

education", as well as having a relatively high level of tertiary attendance for the region with two university campuses located there, and with more women than men graduating from The University of the West Indies campus in Trinidad in recent years. Meanwhile, the last three governments have all issued statements and developed policies which suggest a general commitment to eliminating gender discrimination; Trinidad and Tobago has also had in recent times a female Prime Minister and currently has a female President.

Notwithstanding this positive-sounding gender equality context, there exists a structural and general socio-cultural gender bias in the society that stereotypes gender roles locally and, for many researchers, suggests and maintains a hierarchical relationship between men and women (Reddock 1994; Haynes-Robinson 2008). This hierarchical distinction is understood by many citizens as a biological reality rather than a socio-cultural one (Miller 1991: 330). Culturally and socially, women have often been associated with the domestic and interior and tied to ideas of respectability, marriage and responsibility, damaging their potential spaces of agency and ability for self-expression. Although there are many scenarios where women push back against such stereotyping, nonetheless, motherhood and ideas about female respectability inherited from a British colonial value system were and are placed on women as fixed characteristics to which local women should aspire (De Freitas 1999: 14).

Men, on the other hand, have traditionally not been forced into strait-jackets of respectability and monogamy and have long histories in the society of being valued based on the number of female partners and 'deputies' they can maintain (van Koningsbruggen 1997; Littlewood 1993; Rodman 1971). While women were traditionally controlled by ideas about 'respectability', this double standard of sexual morality in the society has meant men were, and still are in many male spaces, being valued by the category of 'reputation' (Kerrigan 2016). Some scholars have described how such ideas and gender ideologies around respectability and reputation were absorbed culturally, and how many younger members of the wider society were socialised under such ideas that became part of their behavioural logic as they matured (Senior 1991). In her critique of Peter Wilson's (1973) reputation and respectability binary, Jean Besson

highlighted how, "cultural resistance against colonial culture is seen as essentially the preserve of Afro-Caribbean men; while Afro-Caribbean women are regarded as bearers and perpetuators of the Eurocentric colonial value system" (Besson 1993: 19). This was a misleading state of affairs, she noted, because it denied women a space to undermine the traditional conceptions and images of the colonial value system. Furthermore, Caribbean women, just like men, "compete for status, both among themselves and with men" (Besson 1993: 19).

Today, across the Caribbean, some of the highest rates of sexual assault and gender-based violence in the world have been registered (UNODC 2014; UNDP 2012). According to the Commonwealth Secretariat (2016), "Gender Based Violence" is defined as "a violation of human rights that results in all forms of violence based on gender relations. It includes physical abuse and economic deprivation. Its forms include: rape, carnal abuse, family violence, sexual harassment, sexual assault, battery, buggery, [and] wounding with instruments". In this project gender-based violence is not simply violence against women but any violence connected to one's gender and perceptions around societal gender roles.

In terms of figures to document the extent of gender-based violence in Trinidad and Tobago, data collection is, as the Commonwealth Secretariat has noted, "fragmented", "limited" and "unavailable". That said, we do know, according to CAPA, that for the period 2005–2015, there were 263 murders resulting from situations of domestic violence and of those, 112 involved male victims and 151 involved female victims. Seepersad and Wortley (2017) go on to note:

> The CAPA branch of the TTPS as of 2012 recorded detailed data for domestic violence. During the period from 2012 to 2014, 5,407 incidents of domestic violence were recorded. Of these, 2,713 cases or 50.2% were assaults and beatings. This was followed by threats (36.6%), breach of protection orders (7.8%), verbal abuse (2.1%), psychological abuse (2.1%), malicious woundings (1.1%) and acts against children (0.1%). It should be noted here that murder was not included in the data supplied by CAPA. This is because where domestic violence results in murder the crime is classified as a murder, and not as an act of domestic violence. For the period from 2000 to 2013, 329 murders, or 6.9% of all murders were due to domestic violence.

Understood through a Caribbean-centric socio-cultural lens, it becomes obvious to suggest that there is a relationship between socio-cultural and structural imbalances in power between men and women and gender-based violence (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). As was the case historically in the Caribbean, today in Trinidad and Tobago the different values placed on females and males in the society and the unhealthy gender relations this can provoke, shape environments and social interactions to be ripe for gender-based violence to maintain itself as an everyday cultural and social reality and behavioural logic in the society. This happens in action, behaviour, and language-in-use amongst many different layers, and it also often carries with it various heterosexual assumptions (Haynes and DeShong 2017).

In his work on masculinities and gang membership in Medellín, Baird (2018) developed the concept of "masculine capital" to suggest what young men who join gangs can gain through membership and how they accumulate "modern misogynist values" (DeKeseredy and Hall-Sanchez 2018: 890). For those Baird talked to, joining a gang provides access to supposed symbols of the dominant form of hypermasculinity in circulation that can be accumulated by young men. Masculine capital in the context of his gang research in Colombia referred to such characteristics as articulated by one of his informants, "being strong, bringing home money, being a protector, having power, being respected, being a womaniser, a chauvinist, *macho*, brash".

In Trinidad, too, there was a similar sense from the young men we worked with and talked to, and who shared their experiences of everyday life in their communities and schools with us, about an accumulation of masculine capital and the male right/entitlement to use violence against women. In particular, the interactions and answers of the young men we worked with revealed many different and wide-ranging insights related to everyday life and a form of hegemonic patriarchy, or "the masculinity of hegemony" (Edström, Das, and Dolan 2014) that these young men adopt and share "in networks of similar minded males" (DeKeseredy and Hall-Sanchez 2018: 893). In what follows, I explore specifically what the focus group data revealed about a cycle of violence – from gender as violence, to domestic violence, to gang rape – that was normalised in language.

"Breaking Bad" – A Spoken Word Methodology

"Breaking Bad: Understanding Violence at the Intersection between Transnational Organised Crime, Community, and Masculinities in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad", was a multi-level interdisciplinary research project, combining researchers in peace and conflict studies (Dr. Adam Baird, Coventry University), cultural anthropology (Dr. Dylan Kerrigan, The University of the West Indies), and international relations (IR) (Dr. Matthew Bishop, University of Sheffield). On the macro level, the project used an IR lens to investigate the scope and reach of transnational organised crime in Trinidad in recent history; this included qualitative and quantitative indicators building on the datasets of the World Bank, UNDP and UNODC, and involved interviews with key experts across civil society, government, the security services, state institutions and the international development community. On the meso level, qualitative interviews and ethnographic research were conducted in two communities of Port of Spain, Beetham Gardens and Sea Lots, to ask middle-aged and older members of the community, including police officers who have worked there over time, their views on what contributed to the dramatic upturn in violence since the late 1990s.[3] On the micro level, which is the data this article works with, we collected qualitative data on language-in-use and worldviews amongst young people who live in communities of violence, while also sharing with them academic explanations for why violence in their communities might be so high.

The population sample for the micro level data collection of this research project was taken from the geographic area of Port of Spain and its environs. In particular, we worked with students from SERVOL Life Centre Adolescent Development Programme (ADP), aged 16–20, and current and ex-SERVOL faculty and staff. SERVOL is a service organisation engaged in educational and community-based efforts to strengthen the family unit by providing support and education for parents, children and adolescents. The curriculum of the school programme seeks to develop personal values and self-discipline as well as academics and offers each student training in a vocation or trade. Often, those who attend SERVOL are students who have fallen through the gaps of the mainstream secondary system for one reason or another (for example, lack of

attendance, fighting, indiscipline), not simply for bad academics. As such, the students have a variety of academic abilities and literacy levels, from advanced to basic.

For national administration purposes SERVOL is divided geographically into different zones. We worked with students in the North Zone and SERVOL ADP Life Centres located in Beetham Gardens, Morvant, Diego Martin and El Socorro. The breakdown of the initial sample by gender and ADP Life Centre can be seen in Table 1. However, with some people dropping out and general turnover during the 15 weeks, we worked with 30 students in total, with 12 students being regular attendees; they attended more than 10 of the 15 sessions. Consent for the students' participation was requested from parents, the schools and the students themselves; and the workshop aims, including data collection for our research project, plus a take-home participant information sheet with details of the project, were discussed in advance of the first session. It was explained verbally and in writing to all participants that they could remove themselves from the workshops at any time and for any reason. In addition, all participants were given a diary in which to keep notes, poems or other thoughts they wanted to record; they did not have to return the diary or share it with us unless they wanted to do so.

Table 1:
Initial Cohort – ADP Trainees of Servol North Zone
(10 males and 10 females)

Life Centre	Male	Female
Beetham	3	2
El Socorro	2	3
Morvant	3	2
Diego Martin	2	3
Total	**10**	**10**

In developing our research design we identified the importance and salience of oral culture locally (Sadre-Orafai 1998). In particular, we zeroed in on spoken-word poetry as an important community builder and data collection device. Within the last two decades, there has been a global renaissance of spoken-word poetry (Miranda 2012). In Trinidad and Tobago the spoken-word movement has embraced fresh ideas and applications

of the genre, plus hard-hitting lyrics from a new generation of poet-performers seen on YouTube and elsewhere online are providing spoken-word artists with increased exposure. This thriving contemporary genre "is intricately linked to the material and social conditions of the young artistes who produce it" (Miranda 2012). This salience brings credibility and trustworthiness to the genre in the eyes of young adults, making spoken word an important consideration for a culturally resonant, decolonial methodology.

With a whole new generation of young people locally taking an interest in spoken-word poetry as a means of personal development and social change, some organisations working in social change and development in the country now recognise how spoken-word poetry provides access and builds bridges into the life worlds and imaginations of young people (Lengemann 2012). For example, spoken-word poetry is now included when redesigning school curriculums (Yanofsky, van Driel, and Kass 1999), to offer a space to breathe in communities under heavy policing (Wong and Peña 2017), to build community (Dooley 2014), to reconstruct the worldviews of individuals (Winn 2015), in advertising, and for many other uses.

Recognising the emergence of spoken-word poetry over the last 20 years as a strong, culturally relevant, and accessible teaching tool (Low 2011) requiring young people to develop an in-depth focus on language, identity, and literacy development (Michalko 2012), we realised that spoken-word poetry would also produce narrative and linguistic data in the context of data collection if and when turned to areas of salience. Not only do young writers and spoken-word poets need to develop critical thinking and cultural literacy skills but in producing a spoken-word piece it is possible to guide them towards and build foundations for active civic, community, and educational involvement in terms of possible group discussions (Bean and Brennan 2014). The spoken-word methodology also produces lots of data related to young people's life worlds. In spoken word there is an onus on personal expression without the weight of correct spelling and pronunciation. This helps immensely with young people with poor literacy levels.[4] Spoken word can also be a space for fun, as participants play with words, rhymes and storytelling. They make noise and sounds as they desire, which switches up the formality of a

traditional education situation. In our study, spoken word poems created by students became elicitation devices to find out what young people express with their words and this made it easier to ask participants for examples of what they meant. Spoken-word poetry is also an effective data collection tool because it breaks the ice with participants, builds rapport and trust between researchers and students, and builds a safe space for the exchange of intimate details and features of the young people's life experiences.

Not being experts in spoken-word poetry, we connected with a local NGO which facilitated the spoken word aspect of the workshops. We knew of 'The Oral Tradition ROOTS Foundation' because its founder, Mtima Solwazi, was one of my graduate students in sociology at The University of the West Indies. The ROOTS Foundation is known locally for utilising spoken word as a catalyst for social change through the preservation and promotion of oral traditions, with special focus on spoken-word poetry. In particular, they work with working-class populations, which often correlate with urban communities marked by violence associated with transnational organised crime. With the help of Mr. Solwazi and the ROOTS Foundation we drew methodologically from Trinidadian "spoken word" in our workshops, and used art and music culture to explore how male identity, culture, community violence, patriarchy, language and transnational organised crime are intersecting. Alongside the spoken word facilitator and myself, we also had one Trinidadian female psychology postgraduate student from University College London to assist with the workshops; she focussed on working and talking with the young female participants. We also recruited two teachers (one female and one male) from the SERVOL centres themselves who attended and supported most of the weekly sessions.

We used a large, naturally lit seminar room at the National Library of Trinidad and Tobago (NALIS) to hold the workshops on a weekly basis. We had originally planned to hold the workshops at the Beetham Gardens Life Centre but some parents of participants from outside of Beetham, an area heavily stigmatised by the wider national population and government (Kerrigan 2015), asked us to use a different venue. NALIS is in Woodford Square, the historic heart of Port of Spain, and close to transport links for all participants. While the format of the workshop was a large focus-group type discussion setting, the weekly inclusion of

various professionals helped us to break the group into smaller groups and provided opportunities for one-on-one sessions. This enhanced the workshops on a number of levels including allowing participants a space in which to step back and deal with any traumatic or difficult moments experienced in the session. It also helped with data collection in terms of probing a little deeper, when appropriate. We built a variety of field trips into the curriculum including trips to the Fondes Amandes Forestry School, the UNDP offices, and a conference at The University of the West Indies. We also provided food, drink, and TT$20 weekly in travel money for all participants and the SERVOL teaching staff.

In summary, we ran weekly, two-hour spoken-word workshops with male and female 16–20-year-old SERVOL students in Trinidad. In total, 30 participants took part. Each week a different topic was raised for group discussion and an expert on the subject matter invited to address the group. Both before and after the contribution of the subject expert the rest of the allotted time each week was spent on developing spoken-word pieces connected to the week's topic. Subject areas included weaponisation, gender-based violence, transnational drugs, social history, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, and more.

Acting Like a Man

The first three weeks of the workshops were spent getting to know each other, playing word games related to poetry and spoken word, building basic knowledge of gender theories, and explaining what the workshops were about. In these initial interactions, it was clear that all of the participants were familiar with stories about community violence and many had personally witnessed violence in their communities, including domestic violence in their homes. One 17-year-old told us about self-harming with fire and using ice beforehand to numb his body against the pain. Another told us "it was important to show your monster". When we spoke about what this meant he told us it was mainly to stop being bullied at school. Another 17-year-old male, quiet and thoughtful always in his questions and responses, told us that he was put in SERVOL because he had stabbed a bully in the neck with a pen. He told us the bully would not leave him alone and one day he had "activated his monster because quiet people get advantaged". When we asked him what that meant, he

told us it meant "to get violent". One relatively quiet participant told one of us in week three that two years earlier their 19-year-old brother was shot in the head and killed right next to them over a girl. This was done by a man who rode up on a motorbike while the two of them were liming, sitting on a car outside their home, and since then, their mother had been trying to move to Canada. The move happened eight weeks into the spoken-word sessions. Another eloquent 18-year-old male participant told us that he thought what we were doing at the workshops was important because "elites don't like the block", and that "you can't wait to fix a tree when it's big and bent, you must fix it when it's little". When we asked these young men about solutions to violence in their communities and in the country, they all told us they did not think it could change.

In week four which dealt with women and violence, we began the session by re-capping the previous week's topic and activity, "the man box", which an expert from the NGO Promundo-US facilitated.[5] The man box is an exercise which teases out what it means to be a man – the local expectations of being a man, and what masculine capital one is told to accumulate, as a young man growing up, to "be a man". The man box as an activity makes transparent:

> a set of beliefs, communicated by parents, families, the media, peers, and other members of society, that place pressure on men to be a certain way. These pressures tell men to be self-sufficient, to act tough, to be physically attractive, to stick to rigid gender roles, to be heterosexual, to have sexual prowess, and to use aggression to resolve conflicts (Heilman, Barker, and Harrison 2017).

One of the activities we carried out in relation to the man box divided the group by gender. During this activity we asked the young men what it meant to act like a man in their communities. The responses included:
- "Take care of family"
- "Be strong"
- "Fight"
- "Take licks"
- "Don't cry"
- "Own up"
- "Look a certain way"
- "Hide emotions"

- "Play sport"
- "Work"

When we followed up on this list with the question, "What advantages do men who live according to these characteristics accumulate and gain"?, the group told us "respect". Our Promundo facilitator used the moment to re-orientate the young men to rethinking what it means to be a man, and explained how men change when the world around them changes. Yet trying to build a foundation for group discussion about the differences between gender and biological sex proved difficult because all participants, both male and female, had great difficulty in understanding the differences between gender and biological sex. The session went back and forth with the facilitator explaining the differences and the group being confused, continuing to believe over and over that biology and culture were identical. Often, the participants would identify a cultural behaviour as being tied to biology; for example, being caring and being a provider were both believed to be biological. When we explained why they were cultural the group said they understood why, then repeated the same error with other cultural qualities. This suggested to us language problems, a lack of previous discussion in their lives about the differences between gender and biology, and a heavy immersion of our participants in societal gender dynamics and discourses. In the end, there was a breakthrough moment when one of the SERVOL teachers intervened and the message seemed better received, although the definition was not one we had used previously: "Gender is what people say, sex is what you have." The man box then became the gender box, and the group started to understand that many of the qualities they had believed to be biological were cultural, and in fact men and women were capable of all the socio-cultural qualities documented in both the man box and woman box and it was only their sex functions that were biologically different.

Table 2:
Male and Female Participants' Responses to
What it Means to Be a Man/Woman

Man Box	Woman Box
Strength	Breasts
Football	Beautiful

Provider	Horn[6]
Hope	Vagina
Hairy	Responsible
Leader	Emotional
Muscle	Loving
Adam's Apple	Caring
Testosterone	Sweet
Killers	Sexy
Wild	Loud
Violent	Strong
Pain	Tender
Ignorant	Intelligence
Jealous	Gentle
Scary	Reproduce
Strong voice	Wonderful

The exercise was revealing in the context of trying to understand what young men and women think are the expectations related to their gender identity, and it also revealed the idea of 'gender complementarity'. Men and women are presented as "opposite but complementary" (Hamilton 2014), and these assumptions about traditional gender roles support the development of compulsory heterosexuality. Towards the end of the session the discussion revolved around how norms influence people, and how it was possible to role-play healthy male attitudes and behaviour with peers and rework the stereotypes in society about what it is to be a man or woman – there is no man box. This was important to let the young men in the group see that men are part of the solution and not stuck in a pre-determined man box. One of the male participants told us he had never thought to question what society said it meant to be a man. He said, "I didn't know that was an option."

Gender-based Violence

During the discussions, the idea of violence in the home as punishment and 'licks' was accepted and not problematised by the group. In fact, it was the opposite scenario and most participants suggested that it was because of a lack of corporal punishment in schools that the society had got more violent. Worryingly, when the conversations turned to women receiving violence from men no one in the room suggested men should not hit women. Rather, as the group discussed violence and women, the

young men deployed narratives and built on discourses justifying why the sometimes "wonderful" women from the man/woman box exercise deserved violence. These narratives included what I have used as the title of this article, "She look for it". When we probed the young men to find out what they meant by "she look for it" we got many victim-blaming responses:

- "She do ting to provoke dee man"
- "She horn him"
- "Expectin"
- "When dey don't clean the house"
- "When dey don't cook"
- "Embarrass ya in front ya friends"
- "She do some ting she not supposed to"
- "She spend dee money"
- "She asking too many questions"
- "Bad men beat their girls but they deserve it"
- "Women not to be trusted"

One way to understand the language-in-use of these young men in relation to the discursive "chains of causality" (Linde 1983) they created to justify why gender-based violence is acceptable, is that "forms of hegemonic patriarchy ... are not sustained in a sociocultural vacuum of individuals acting on their own but in networks of similar-minded males" (DeKeseredy and Hall-Sanchez 2018: 893). This is because violence against women can be seen as a form of social organisation and maintenance of a particular social order where such violence is considered a social norm and an element of hegemonic masculinity and masculine capital that networks of men perform to assert social power.

The work of Salazar and Öhman with young men in Nicaragua suggests a similar insight (Salazar and Öhman 2015). After conducting focus groups with over 90 men on the topic of violence against women, they developed four insights related to the types of discourse the men they talked to mobilised to justify violence against women. These were, "a challenging inequality discourse, an ambiguous liberal discourse, a paternalistic ambiguous discourse, and a hostile macho discourse" (Salazar and Öhman 2015: 135). In particular, the responses of the young men to the

question, "What did they mean when they justified violence by the phrase 'she look for it'?" are captured by Salazar and Öhman's "ambiguous liberal discourse" and the "paternalistic ambiguous discourse".

In the ambiguous liberal discourse there is "a partial recognition of women's autonomy" in the context that violence against women is not justified without a reason (Salazar and Öhman 2015: 143). This is the idea that "physical Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) is rejected under most circumstances because it is considered unmanly, as manhood is associated with men's protective attitude toward other family members" (Salazar and Öhman 2015: 138). That said, the ambiguous liberal discourse also promotes the idea that men's power over women through violence can be asserted when women "look for it". This can be seen in the justification list of reasons above, given by our participants. It might also be seen in the absence of any response that said that gender-based violence is never justified. For example, Salazar and Öhman make the following argument:

> One key feature of this discursive position is its stance on men's controlling behaviors over women. In this case, men's dominance over women is present in some domains but absent from others, its intensity varying according to the arenas where men and women interact. In the private arena, women are given more freedom to make decisions on their own and to challenge their partner's opinions. In the public arena, the discourse reinforces men's rights to control women's interactions and relations in society, especially with other men. Here, the issue of trust intersects with men's fears of their partner's infidelity (Salazar and Öhman 2015: 138).

Men being 'horned', women as unfaithful, and women who are out to deceive men were a constant narrative from the young men we spoke with. Salazar and Öhman also note that another function of the controlling ambiguous liberal discourse is to subordinate women's pleasure to men's wants and this has the function of denying women's sexuality as legitimate outside of "a stable partner relationship". They observe further that, "Women who exercise their right to enjoy a sexual life while not being in an established relationship are criticized, disqualified, and discriminated against" (Salazar and Öhman 2015: 139).

The "paternalistic ambiguous discourse" also seemed to be recruited in the language of our male participants. If we connect the responses participants gave about gender stereotypes as outlined in Table 2 to the responses to why violence against women is justified because "she look for it", we see that the language-in-use of the young men in Trinidad and Tobago is built on both "ambiguous liberal discourse" and the "paternalistic ambiguous discourse". As Salazar and Öhman (2015: 140) highlight, both discourses overlap with regard to the subordination and control of women's sexuality, and both have an "ambiguous stance on physical IPV and responsibility for sexual assault". However, the paternalistic ambiguous position "is more inflexible without allowing women's autonomy in any arena. Men's controlling behavior is justified and traditional gender relations are upheld by advocating emphasized femininity. This discourse strongly emphasizes the relevance of men's power status in the gender order" (Salazar and Öhman 2015: 140). This last point clearly played out in the responses of the young men we spoke to who recruited and deployed hegemonic patriarchal sentiments about traditional interior/domestic ideas of respectability and female gender roles that are familiar in the literature on gender roles in the Caribbean (De Freitas 1999; Besson 1993; Wilson 1973).

A Cycle of Violence

Some of the respondents took the discussion in the direction of ideas about a "cycle of violence". They connected violence they had seen or experienced in their homes to other forms of violence. One participant told us about his father who "was a bad man", bad man here being a euphemism for gang member, and who used to abuse his mother in front of him. The young man described how his mother would get "depressed, she couldn't go anywhere. She got angry, vex. She didn't function how she used to, she got aggressive. It was like she was in a cell distant from her self nuh, from family members. It played with her mental state. She took drugs. And now she's violent with her new partner." He told us his father regularly beat his mother in the face, "so no one else would want her". Another young male, who had previously shared with us his self-harm story, told us how his father beat and kicked his mother regularly. This included kicking her down the stairs. He told us, "domestic violence

happens regularly at home". Another told us that parental violence by mothers against their children is because "the mother suffers violence". Strikingly, these descriptions are similar to those found in Caribbean historian Bridget Brereton's work on the historical cycle of violence that existed during colonialism (2010). For Caribbean historians (Brereton 2010; Shepherd 2017), the Caribbean's story can be told as a long genealogy of gender-based violence from conquest, colonisation and neo-colonialism where a variety of forms of violence we now define as gender-based violence were commonplace. These, according to Shepherd (2017), would have included:

- Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring as part of the human trafficking and perpetrated by crew against women and girls on the Middle Passage
- Physical, sexual and psychological violence including battering, sexual exploitation, sexual abuse of females in the household, and violence related to exploitation on the plantation and other spaces of exploitation during the slavery period
- Physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetrated in the home against men and women and children in the post-colonial period and at times condoned by law enforcement officials

Brereton, like Shepherd, identifies gender-based violence, rape and the presumed ownership of women's bodies, amongst other things during colonialism, as the historical background to the current culture of violence found in Trinidad and Tobago.

The Body as Violence

In many ways, Brereton's suggestion of a culture of gender-based violence in Trinidad and Tobago was indicated in the data we collected. What is seen at home and talked about amongst other men can be said to shape young men's ideas of what is acceptable male behaviour. For example, the workshop topic for week four was "Women and Violence". Our special invited guests were a female UWI lecturer in Social Work and a female UWI PhD candidate in social work. After the recap of the man box we began by getting two of the students to lie down on large pieces of paper that we had stuck together and we traced the outline of their bodies. We

then pinned the two life-sized body outlines on the wall and began by pointing at different parts of the body before asking the students in the room to tell us "what parts of the body are violence?" The activity was designed to help students unpack how violent victimisation takes place. The responses were wide-ranging and included:

- "Hands as violence" – 16 yr. Male
- "Mental violence. How parents grow you up" –16 yr. Male
- "Feet. When you kill you have to run" – 17 yr. Male
- "Men use body parts as weapons" – 17 yr. Male
- "If it's a rich man she uses her vagina" – 17 yr. Male
- "Men use their penis to get you pregnant, rape you then leave you" – 19 yr. Female
- "Women receive violence on their body" – 17 yr. Female
- "Women use their vaginas for sex and STDs" – 16 yr. Male
- "Cock tax. Wear a tights and catch all of dem" – 16 yr. Male

As it appears in Brereton's narrative, so violence against women's bodies, stigma against women's bodies, and the idea of women as devious and untrustworthy – three elements in a wider normalisation of a culture of violence locally – also emerged in the data we collected. That these sentiments appear in the language-in-use of our participants might be interpreted to suggest that some young men in Trinidad and Tobago are learning about and behaving in ways that sustain, reinforce and reproduce their acceptance of the culture and use of violence against women and each other. As Miedema and Fulu note (2018: 890), "When a society's central ideal of masculinity is characterised by men's power over women, men are more likely to perpetrate IPV." Or in the context of this article, young men would see gender-based violence as a justified male behaviour in certain socio-cultural scenarios.

Parrying

The next workshop discussion began with the prompt, "Are there some types of violence only women face?" After some initial back and forth the group first mentioned domestic violence as a possibility, then rape. During the discussion the issue of rape turned to marital rape and during

that discussion the young man who had earlier shared his metaphor of the importance of fixing a little tree rather than a big tree, and also eloquently explained emotional intelligence to us another time, told the room, "A team can 'parry' a girl into willing group sex and this is not rape." 'Parrying' and 'team' are a reference to gang rape. Four other young men voiced that this was true and said they had seen it at their schools. In the short time before the facilitator redirected the conversation to explain that what the young men were talking about was gang rape and was "not ok", we were also told that the young women involved in these gang rapes were "bad tings", that "they wanted to do it", and that "they liked it". The young men also told us "parrys are planned" and "the one I saw she was bribed". Local sociologist, Daphne Phillips, in a study of behaviours in 33 secondary schools in Trinidad and Tobago, also documented talk and evidence of this form of sexual assault in the local school system (Phillips 2009). For Phillips, in two of the schools in which she conducted her study the young people she spoke to told her that this form of gang rape of girls by boys occurred, and the boys were reporting it was done "with the consent of the girls". The boys described the act as 'parrying', as in we 'parry she'.

Based on what the young men in our study told us, it appeared that to some of them women's bodies are commodified, and an entitlement; they are to be used by men. Women's bodies can be negotiated, owned, and abused to "protect" them from others taking them away or to provide young men with the appearance of masculine capital. Via the act of 'parrying' a girl, the young men's words could be interpreted as suggesting that they know what a woman wants, and that she, herself, does not know what she wants and must be convinced. This makes the act of sex transactional and implies that women do not have equal bartering power. It is also clear from their descriptions that parrying is an act done "to" someone and not "with" someone. The framing of girls as "bad tings" has the effect of making women less worthy of care, sympathy or empathy, while also adding to the idea that sexual women cannot be victimised or are in some way complicit in their own victimisation. In the way the young men spoke they appeared to be implicated and already taking part in heavily gendered and toxic power dynamics. In many ways, the young men were speaking for the women, as though they were entitled to do

so based on how they understood gender roles in society. They get to define consent and, in this way, they are exercising the power and male privilege they hold to shape the dominant ideas and discourse. After all, who would believe a 'bad ting, who look for it'?

If we return to Salazar and Öhman's (2015) discourses we can see similar realities to what they described in relation to men in Nicaragua. There is "an ambiguous stance on responsibility for sexual assault", for example. It is women who are at fault "for their inability to make men 'respect' them". Responsibility for sexual violence is transferred to women who are not victims and portrayed as tempting or teasing men and consenting participants because they are paid. By suggesting the young women involved in parrying are 'bad tings', who 'wanted to do it' and that 'they liked it', some of the young men in our study, in order to support their language-in-use, were using discourses of young women as non-respectable transgressors of societal norms of appropriate behaviour. Salazar and Öhman note that this "highlights the need to problematize sexual assault from a perspective that encourages men to reflect on how the different femininity ideals that they construct are used to justify men's sexual assault toward women" (144).

Conclusion

Carrington, Hogg and Sozzo (2016), and DeKeseredy and Hall-Sanchez (2018), amongst others, have made the call that Southern criminology needs more research "into what motivates men to be abusive". Or, put another way, "While more research on women is required, the research community is now at the point where it can confidently state that a substantial number of women in the Global South experience various types of woman abuse and, therefore, it is time to use some different techniques to yield better answers to this: why does he do that?" (DeKeseredy and Hall-Sanchez 2018: 893). What we have seen in this small sample of data from our larger fieldwork project in Trinidad and Tobago is a relationship between the ideas expressed in language by some of our male participants and the types of discourses around gender and normative gender roles such language is built on.

Our sample, in the main, lived in urban communities marked by violence associated with transnational organised crime. This

included violence witnessed on the streets and environs of their local communities, in their schools, in homes, and on social media. The social structures of a society, as the political sociologist C. Wright Mills would have described it, produce public issues within which individuals find themselves suspended (Mills 1959: 9).[7] There is a complex local story to tell here of colonial violence shaping culture and influencing social outcomes; of norms around gender developing out of and in relation to cultures of violence; and of individuals and their ideas about the world being shaped by such social structures. Of course, the story does not end there; economic ups and downs in the post-colonial era, the emergence of Trinidad and Tobago from the 1980s onward as a major geographic player in the transnational drug trade, with the guns and societal corruption that the war on drugs and transnational organised crime brings, not to mention the consistently high murder rates and communities of violence such factors engender, are also important contextual factors. All these environmental factors and many more structure and shape the lives of the nation's youth. They shape the norms and discourses related to everyday life that many young people consume and reproduce, and that shape them in various ways. Of course, as we recognise how structure and agency interact and constrain young men's imaginations, influencing their behaviours and values, we must also acknowledge that all men do have the power to make conscious decisions about entering into violence or not. As such, the "influence that structural factors have on men's behavior must not be used to negate men's individual responsibility for the violence that they enact over women, but it is an important aspect when analyzing men's violence against women" (Salazar and Öhman 2015: 145).

With this background in mind, what can we suggest about masculinities and "acting like a man" from the data we collected from our participants? First, it became clear in the data collection that these young men see violence happening around them regularly and they have adapted their lives and the narratives they tell themselves and each other to such a reality. When asked where violence comes from, they blame society, their families, and their communities for the violence in their lives. The nuances of history, culture and sociology are not part of the stories they tell themselves and each other. Another issue, not presented in the

discussion, but that emerged during the project was that the participants did not recognise a residual link between transnational organised crime and the violence and weapons in their communities. For them, their communities were violent from the beginning, and that is it. There is no backstory in their narratives. This is partly due to the fact that they were all under 20 and it is in the last 20 years that their communities, as the statistical data in the first part of the article demonstrates, have been plagued by violence. The young men also seemed to be cognisant that the violence they witnessed in the home is part of a cycle of violence in their communities, schools and back to the home. In terms of how the young men spoke about and understood gender-based violence, again their ideas of acting like a man and accumulating masculine capital produced an understanding of violence against women as something that happens because the women themselves do something linked to perceived gender norms that legitimates a man using violence against a woman. The women 'look for it' and, as men, they pull from discourse that suggests they should respond violently when the socio-cultural rupture occurs and this, in turn, reinforces the hierarchy of male power over women.

Again, this formulation and reasoning requires particular discourses to support it textually in language. Both the "ambiguous liberal discourse" and the "paternalistic ambiguous discourse" illustrate how this relationship between discourse and language functions in the lives of our young male sample. The discourses support gender inequality and the legitimation of violence against women while, at the same time, acknowledging that violence against women needs a justification and is not justified without a reason. The reason, however, is built on expectations of gender roles, gender roles that many of these young men understood as biological realities and not socio-cultural shapers of behaviour. As such, the language-in-use of many of these young men makes it plausible in their minds that young women may look for and want sexual assault because they are 'bad' and 'they want it'. This example of the "paternalistic ambiguous discourse" justifies men's controlling behaviour based on ideas of traditional gender relations, which reinforce men's right to women and men's hierarchical power over women. This suggests that the youth in our study isolate their local experiences of

violence and gender from a transnational circulation in which they are involved, in one way or another, as we all are. In this article we have seen how young people experience global processes but, also, the barriers they have to understanding those processes and their influence.

Limitations

In the context of our participatory methodology, the data upon which our research findings rest was gathered from participants in workshops specifically designed to collect particular information and elicit the kinds of material we wanted to access around masculinities and violence from young men. This methodological reality, of course, informs our analysis. Yet, on some level, this raises the question of whether the kinds of reflective statements and language-in-use data produced through the workshops are credible, and if they would have emerged in a more generally observational setting. This is not a concern about positivist objectivity or some sort of "purity" of interaction, in any way, but it does suggest questions about the kinds of data one might expect this particular action methodology to produce or not and the potential implications of this, so it is useful here to be explicit about the relationship between grassroots social change work and research.

As Bennett suggests, "Participatory Action Research (PAR) is seen as a flexible method that complements the ideals held by many academic researchers in the various fields of anthropology, social sciences, history, theology, economics, philosophy, social work, community and economic development" (2004: 20). While Macdonald describes PAR as "a qualitative inquiry that is considered democratic, equitable, liberating, and life-enhancing" (2012: 35), she also goes on to note that "the philosophical underpinnings of PAR are congruent with postmodern tradition that embraces a dialectic of shifting understandings whereby objectivity is impossible and multiple or shared realities exist" (MacDonald 2012: 36). And while there is a vast literature on many of the positives of such research, the research on its challenges is plentiful, too.

These challenges included, in our case, that the group we worked with was "'made' rather than 'born'" (Bennett 2004). Further, and in terms of overall workshop attendance, there was attrition, and not all persons attended the sessions every week. Other limitations to be mindful of

include our need to persuade the participants of the importance and benefits of the research project, and this connects to another issue for us, found in the literature, the raising of false hopes with the group (Bennett 2004: 26). We built up rapport and developed a supportive and safe environment, which many of the participants told us they began to look forward to each week; however, we did not build any local capacity for continuing the workshops and their supportive environment after we left, which is a major negative of the project and something we have tried to rectify by returning to the community a year after the project ended and training some of the participants to work with the ROOTS Foundation. It also raises the issue of researchers entering communities, getting the data they need to publish the articles they need for their academic careers and leaving again – in such a scenario a central critical question of PAR becomes, who benefits most from PAR? The community or the research team?

Notes

1   This information is contained in the 2013 report, which includes figures on Trinidad and Tobago from the 2012 report.

2   In 2016, 133 murders of the total of 458 happened in Port of Spain and its environs.

3   Interestingly, "guns" and "smart phones", not drugs and crime, were suggested by many of the persons we spoke to.

4   In the first few workshop sessions many participants would use their WhatsApp social media app with its automatic spell check to verify if they spelt a word correctly. When we explained that spoken word is less about correct spelling and more about expression and communication, the types of spoken word poems the participants produced were transformed.

5   Promundo works to promote gender equality and create a world free from violence by engaging men and boys in partnership with women and girls. National and local governments, foundations, bilateral and multilateral aid organisations, major non-governmental agencies and individual donations fund it. It has member organisations in the USA, Brazil, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Portugal.

6   'Horn' and 'horning' mean to cuckold. It is the local phrase for infidelity.

7   "Both the correct statement of the problem and the range of possible solutions require us to consider the economic and political institutions of the society, and not merely the personal situation and character of a scatter of individuals" (Mills 1959: 9).

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