

POWER, PRIVILEGE, AND PATRIARCHY

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POWER, PRIVILEGE, AND PATRIARCHY: THE COMPLEXITIES THAT
ARISE FOR WOMEN ENDURING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AROUND
ACCESSIBILITY TO SERVICES IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

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Descriptive Note

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Abstract

Domestic violence is a complex crime against humanity that has been socially constructed over time by a patriarchal system that has encouraged an imbalance of power relationships between men and women for centuries (Dupont & Sokoloff, 2005, p. 42-43). The objective of this thesis is to create further dialogue based on the pioneering work of Danna and Parsad's (1989) research in exploring the role colonization plays in shaping domestic violence in the Caribbean. As a result, this research identified gaps in knowledge around women's reluctance to report incidents of domestic violence, a tendency to rationalize men's violence and at some level male violence is tolerated, as well how colonization altered the national identities and ethnicities of Caribbean people.

The concepts presented throughout this thesis were informed through social constructionism, where certain ideologies have created psychological or 'internal' divisions around ethnicity, region, and gender (Brereton, 2010). Over time, Danna and Parsad (1989) argue that the implications of colonization have created issues of insecurities, frustration, and ego by means of social norms which emphasize a male *machismo*. Danna and Parsad (1989)'s study also refers to the impact of colonization as a root of domestic violence and how Caribbean history reproduces male dominance. As a result, violence against women and domestic violence is based on gender inequality and female subordination, which has transcended through colonization. Further, women's vulnerability is reinforced by the lack of

economic opportunity and the power of authorities to dismiss or minimize women's issues (p. 23). This has led me to think about the history of Trinidad and Tobago, domestic violence, and how this has impacted on women. In addition, I asked if such policies and legislation as the Domestic Violence Act (1991) support organizations in their role to help and assist women from violence then why is violence against women not decreasing in Trinidad and Tobago?

To explore these ideas and the impact domestic violence has had on Caribbean women, I engaged in a qualitative research study over a six-week period on the islands of Trinidad and Tobago. This research focused on two major questions: (a) what are some of the contributing factors that sustain domestic violence in Trinidad and Tobago and (b) how do organizations respond to the demands of women enduring domestic violence. The research engaged a feminist and a critical theoretical approach, eliciting stories from 10 women. From these stories, a number of themes emerged which included: 1) 'visible' yet 'invisible'; 2) 'light skin'/'dark skin'; 3) 'private matters'; 4) re-victimization of women by the system; and 5) an overarching theme of 'power' and 'control'. As a result, women shared that domestic violence and the history of colonization play a role in keeping women in subordinate positions in three disadvantaged dimensions: reproductive health, empowerment, and the labour market. Yet, this research also speaks to potential ways in which men and women can find common ground through the deconstruction of the history and colonial legacy of violence (Cruz et al., 2011; Murdoch, 2009). The research also points to ways for the unequal distribution of

power to be minimized in both the public and private spheres, and ways to understand the impact of domestic violence and the possibility of ending it in the future.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated in memory of my warm and loving mother, Mrs. Janet Henry Warner. My simple words on this paper cannot express the pride and respect that I carry in my heart for you daily. A selfless human being who carried the life of five ambitious and independent children while living her own personal violent storm. Although I may never know all that you sacrificed for us, we are extremely honoured that you were given to us by God to help us grow into human beings you could be proud of today. I desperately miss your presence, but your life lives through us and the work on this research is a representation that circumstances cannot keep a strong, resilient, and independent woman down. On behalf of Beverly (Gail), Kent, Joslyn, Ingrid (Jillian), and Karen, I pay homage in your memory through this research study for your strength and commitment to loving and forgiving, and for that I say, thank you, Mommy.

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To my children, Joshua and Jesse Thornton, words are not enough to say all the joy I feel in my soul for both of you. Thank you both for allowing me this

opportunity to risk it all in the name of domestic violence research. Your support and encouragement in good and bad moments, and when the tears became too much to bear, you both held me up and encouraged me to go on. This research would not have been possible without your love and support.

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Love you both!

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List of Abbreviations and Symbols

BA	Bachelor of Arts
B.S.W	Bachelor of Social Work
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CELAC	Community of Latin American and Caribbean States
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CSS	Critical Social Science
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
HSC	Housing Support Centre (government housing)
LGBTQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered or Queer
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NGOs	Non-governmental organizations
O.A.B.I	Organization for Abused and Battered Individuals
PNM	People's National Movement
SLT	Social Learning Theory

TTPS Trinidad and Tobago Police Services

Trinbagonian Citizens of Trinidad and Tobago

UN United Nation

WHO World Health Organization

Declaration of Academic Achievement

I, Karen Maria Warner Thornton, declare this thesis to be my own work. I am the sole author of this document. As of October 1st, 2015, no part of this work has been published or submitted for publication or for a higher degree at another institution.

To the best of my knowledge, the content of this document does not infringe on anyone's copyright.

My supervisor, Dr Mirna Carranza, and the second member of my supervisory committee, Dr. Bonnie Freeman has provided guidance and support at all stages of this project.

I completed all of the research work for this project.

Introduction

Domestic violence violates the human rights of women, while nullifying the fundamental freedom and beauty of being a woman. In society, women continue to struggle for gender equality, safety, and acceptance. In most cases, violence against women occurs at the hands of a husband or intimate male partner (Antai, 2011).

Domestic violence may seem to be a local issue; however, it affects women worldwide. The literature reviewed for this study revealed that domestic violence in many Caribbean countries has received limited scholarly attention, even though the incidence of ‘wife battering’ has been viewed as the most common form of abuse experienced by women and girls (Creque, 1995 and Heise, 1994) in Barbados, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago (Le Franc, Samms-Vaughan, Hambleton, Fox & Brown, 2008). Scholars have expressed the unequal distribution of power in society between women and men, resulting in gender discrimination (Heise, 1994; Khan, 2000; and Lykes & Qin, 2001).

The United Nations (UN) website defines violence against women as "...any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life" (Violence against women, 2014). While the UN’s definition captures the basic form of domestic violence, women are still subjected to different forms of violence, such as: emotional, financial, and spiritual. In addition, there are a number of international organizations which recognize domestic violence as one of the most

prevalent human rights violations in the world (Muturi & Donald, 2006). In 2014, the World Health Organization (WHO) website reported that violence against women has become a global health problem of epidemic proportions (Violence against women, 2014). It has been reported by the WHO that one in three women experience sexual or physical violence at least once in their lives and 35% of women around the world are victims of sexual or physical violence (Violence against women, 2014). Globally, 38% of murders of women are committed by an intimate partner (Violence against women, 2014). The 2014 UN *Women against Violence: Facts sheet* reports echo the WHO reports by acknowledging that gender-based violence (GBV) undermines the health, dignity, security, and autonomy of its victims, yet remains shrouded in a culture of silence (Garcia-Moreno, et al., 2005). Statements made in a report by members at the *Plenary of the 57th Session of Commission on the Status of Women* announced that nation states must take violence against women seriously by implementing strategies and resources to address violence against women directly (Permanent Mission of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, 2013).

Though domestic violence is not confined to a specific culture, region, country, or group of women in society, a proportion of women will experience physical violence at least once in their lifetime (United Nation Statistics Division, 2005). The chart by the UN Statistics Division illustrates the decrease in domestic violence in some countries between the years 1995-2006, whereas domestic violence cases have increased in other countries (cited in Abramsky et al., 2011,

p.109). More importantly, many nations have taken progressive action against domestic violence through legislation, mandatory arrest policies, and anti domestic violence strategies (Lazarus-Black, 2001). Activism for equal opportunities for women and the global ‘waves’ of the feminist movement to end violence against women and girls have also helped tremendously. Although, some studies report that the current evidence surrounding domestic violence comes largely from industrialized settings, and methodological differences limit the extent to which comparisons can be made between many of these studies (Garcia-Moreno, et al., 2006).

Reflection of Self

In many economically resource-rich countries, such as Trinidad and Tobago, domestic violence remains disproportionately a “private sphere” matter (Lazarus-Black, 2001). Women’s voices are being silenced under patriarchal relations and cultural ideologies socially constructed within society, a by-product of colonialism (Alexander, 1994). I have always been interested in the colonial history of the Caribbean and how it contributed to domestic violence. As a born and bred *Trinbagonian*, violence against women on the island has fascinated my consciousness since childhood. While growing up I felt that there was a contradiction of behaviours witnessed between men and women. In my experience, on one hand, women were revered as strong matriarchal heads of the family and refer to as “queens” (James-Sebro, 2001); strong, independent, resourceful, and educated women (Mohammed, 1995). However, on the other hand, women were

brutally attacked and sometimes killed by intimate partners; many men perceived them as being uncontrollable or somehow not meeting their unspoken masculine expectations. As a witness of violence in the home and community, I can remember feeling a sense of powerlessness and a lack of understanding as to why domestic violence occurred. For years, I carried this confusion with me until entering the Masters program at McMaster University. It became clearer to me that in order to resolve these dubious feelings that I had as a child, I needed to explore the complexity of the male/female relationships in Trinidad and Tobago; where this beautiful paradise is shrouded in a paradox, plagued by domestic violence, by the men that praise women's sophistication, beauty, confidence, and independent spirits.

My aim with this study is to expand on a dialogue started by Danns and Parsad (1989) *Domestic Violence in the Caribbean: A Guyana Case Study*. The goal is to bring attention to the nation-state's unique history in relation to the growing number of domestic violence cases and reports, and of intimate partner murders which continue to grow in Trinidad and Tobago. Therefore, this research will explore the history of colonization as a contributing factor that continues to sustain domestic violence in the 'private' sphere among Trinidad and Tobago women. In addition, this research will explore the Caribbean island's Domestic Violence Act (1991, 1999, and 2005) and how organizations respond to the demands of women enduring domestic violence and what women encounter when accessing services within the national structure of Trinidad and Tobago. For this

reason, my research questions aim to ask: What are the contributing factors that sustain domestic violence in Trinidad and Tobago? How do the organizations respond to the demands of women enduring domestic violence?

I went into this research knowing that time and resource constraints would be an issue. However, my intention was to continue a dialogue through this research that one day would contribute on a global level the voices of racialized women, women of colour, and Caribbean women. It should be noted that this thesis was not intended to offer universal solutions for racialized groups in society as there are various complexities around culture, ethnicity, and geographic location.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework which guides this research study is focused through a critical feminist lens in exploring the factors that contribute to domestic violence in Trinidad and Tobago, as well how organizations respond to the demands of women enduring domestic violence in Trinidad and Tobago. I have also decided to use a Critical Social Science (CSS) perspective (Carter & Little, 2007) exploring the idea of colonization at the root of domestic violence (Cain, 1995; Danna & Parsad, 1989).

Feminist Lens

A critical feminist lens allows me to explore the relative positions of power in a patriarchal society that shape the differences between men and women. Feminist theories conceptualize domestic violence as a pattern that can only be

understood by examining the social context, which includes the structure of relationships in a patriarchal society and the imbalance of ‘power’ and ‘control’ (Jasinski, 2001). Patriarchy is typically defined as a system of social and cultural arrangements that privilege men over women (Hunnicut, 2009).

By using a critical feminist approach, I am able to examine the gender inequalities of society and the role of colonization. The critical feminist view can be used to examine the major factors of women’s oppression alongside ‘power’ and ‘control’ with many other relations, such as social class, ethnicity, deriving from male-female relations (Beirne & Messerschmidt, 2000).

The critical feminist approach has long argued that various characteristics must be taken into consideration when addressing social and structural changes taking place within society. Influences such as an individual’s race, ethnicity, class, gender, power, and sexuality could have profound influences on the construction of an individual’s identity and their ways of knowing and existing in the world (Qin, 2004). Lykes (1985) argues that the inequalities of power include race, ethnicity, class, and other dimensions. She argues that all humans are embedded in and emergent from, a matrix of social relations organized by differing and mobile dimensions of power. However, Hesse-Biber (2002), Lykes (1985), and Qin (2001) acknowledges that there are limitations to the critical feminist approach which draw from the experiences of middle and upper-middle-class ‘white’ women, therefore marginalizing the voices and experiences of poor racialized women (Hess-Biber, 2002). Additionally, critics continue to point out that a systematic examination of

differences in constructions for ‘self’ among women who occupy different socio-economic and racial positions in society is sorely lacking (Collins, 1990 cited in Hesse-Biber, 2002). In this sense, women’s sense of ‘self-in-relation’ is shaped by ‘gendered’ culture that is abstract from many other critical cultural elements that are embedded in a larger socio-cultural structure (Qin, 2004, p. 297-299; Lykes & Qin, 2001, p. 625-631; Lykes, 1985, p. 357-360). Qin (2004) states that following the critical lines of thinking about self and culture, critical feminist theorists further argue that culture is not neutral; culture is grounded in material social relations along differing dimensions of power (p. 299). Also, a critical feminist perspective pays attention to the gender inequality (Lykes, 1995, 1989 cited in Qin, 2004), especially for women that are most likely to experience discrimination and stereotyping by dominant society on the basis of race, ethnicity, class, power, gender, age, and sexuality (Qin, 2004). A critical feminist perspective allows me to explore the power, privilege, patriarchy, ethnicity, masculinities, and racism women experience in Trinidad and Tobago

Critical Social Science - Colonization

The Critical Social Science (CSS) perspective is an inquiry which explores the ‘real’ structures in the material world to help people understand and change their conditions and build a better world for themselves (Neuman, 1997 p. 59). In this research, I aim to explore the ideas of colonization and decolonization from a CSS perspective. My aim is to “disrupt understandings of cultural matters that marginalize anyone deemed ‘different’ or the ‘other’ by the dominant group. The

hope is that this standpoint would move the field toward “deeper critical thinking, reflexivity and emancipatory action” (Cruz, 2011, p.203); especially around colonization in Trinidad and Tobago. Neuman (1997) argues that CSS is about changing the world, uncovering myths, revealing unhidden truths, and helping people to change the world for them. The goal of including CSS in this research is the empowerment of women. By employing CSS research I believe that social reality is always changing and that change is rooted in the tensions, conflicts, or contradictions of social relations or institutions (Neuman, 1997).

The next chapter provides a brief history of Trinidad and Tobago and the politics surrounding domestic violence. I will also explore the Domestic Violence Act that was developed in an effort to reduce the violence against women and girls and find a way to protect females in violent situation (Razack, 1995) in Trinidad and Tobago.

Chapter 1: Clearing the Air: Trinidad and Tobago

A Brief History

Trinidad and Tobago is known for being one of the most ethnically diverse regions in the Caribbean as a result of its strong colonial history in the transatlantic trade of enslaved Africans and indentured labourers. Brereton (2010) reports that during the period between 1830s and the 1940s, recorded history around this time stated that the violent aspects that took place in the Caribbean helped shape the violent culture and society, especially those relating to domestic abuse and other forms of violence. The use of corporal punishment (usually flogging) was a routine behaviour of plantation discipline, and short of actual murder there were no effective restrictions that existed on the rights of the owner or manager of slaves to punish at his discretion (Brereton, 2010). James-Sebro (2001) stated in his dissertation that the “country’s history of enslavement and indentureship, the imposition of foreign ideology and values during colonialism, and continuing struggle for freedom during post-independence phase” (p.9) set the stage for a violent struggle between men and women in Trinidad and Tobago.

Before Trinidad and Tobago’s independence in 1962, the history of this nation evolved out of a ‘culture of violence’ (Brereton, 2010, p. 2) that began with the indigenous (Arawak and Caribs) people of the region and the Spaniards that first made claims to the islands (Brereton, 2010). As documented in Brereton (2010), the first great genocide of the modern history of the Caribbean was the

attack and enslavement of the indigenous people to the point of extermination. Soon after, enslaved Africans were brought to the Caribbean islands as slave labourers to work under plantation owners. This created a particularly violent system in which African slaves rebelled against their colonizers during periods from 1593-95 in Trinidad, and 1771, 1773, and 1774 in Tobago (Brereton, 2010, p. 3-6). When slavery was abolished around 1830s, not long after numerous African rebellions in the Caribbean islands, Indians from British India were imported to the island (1845-1917) as indentured labourers to work on plantations and engage in domestic chores (Brereton, 2010).

Trotman (seen in Brereton, 2010) reported that by the end of the 19th century a ‘culture of violence’ (Brereton, 2010) was established through the efforts of colonization and slavery in the Caribbean colonies. Brereton (2010) states that while the ‘culture’ was pervasive and in some respects “gender neutral” there was no doubt that women of all ethnicities were prominent among its victims – as well as being, in some situations, its active agents (p. 2).

Analysis of Trinidad and Tobago Domestic Violence Act

In the early 1950s, a group of women known as the Caribbean Women’s National Assembly led by Christina Lewis (Brereton, 2010) campaigned for better treatment of women and girls on the islands because nothing was being done to address this issue. It was not until 1991, that Trinidad and Tobago became the first English-speaking country in the Caribbean to enact legislation to protect women

against the abuse by intimate partner violence (Lazarus-Black, 2001). This resulted from the people of Trinidad and Tobago gaining the right to petition the court for protection orders against a violent or abusive family member. The victory was seen as a radical legal development, as there were limited legal sanctions available to women who had been terrorized at the hands of family members or intimate partners for years (Lazarus-Black, 2006). Due to the efforts by a progressive women's movement in Trinidad and Tobago, attention to domestic violence against women and girls gained government and non-governmental groups' support (Cummings, 2009; Lazarus-Black, 2001; and Reddock, 1994). Prior to the Act, victims of domestic violence faced barriers from dominant institutions, such as family, religious institutions, hospitals, judicial systems, and police departments, as they were rarely willing to interfere in 'private' matters, as incidents of domestic violence were viewed as time-consuming and costly (Lazarus-Black, 2001, p. 389). The implementation of the new legislation, Lazarus-Black (2001) states, was a move that "must be understood as part of the process of decolonization and nation-building that began formally in Trinidad with independence from Great Britain in 1962" (p. 388). Since the inception of Domestic Violence Act, there have been two amendments; one in 1999 and another in 2005.

The Caribbean nation amended the Domestic Violence Act in 1999 to enhance existing legislation on domestic violence. The new amendments mandated police officers to intervene in "situations previously deemed off limits and provided for the issuance of protection orders" (Research Directorate, Immigration and

Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa, 2008). Additional legislation protecting women from abusive partners includes the Offences against the Person (Amendment) (Harassment) Act (Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa, 2008). The second amendment in 2005 added sections on "harassment" which define a range of offences including: following, watching, or making contact with a person in a way that causes "alarm" or "distress," and "putting a person in fear of violence" with intent to arouse fear (Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa, 2008).

Subsequently, 24 years after the Domestic Violence Act of 1991, victims of domestic violence continue to face violence: physical, psychological, sexual, financial, and religious by close relatives and acquaintances. The ideas of 'private matters,' a lack of support, and unreliable services have dissuaded many victims from filing criminal charges. As a consequence, families, friends, and religious institutions continue to view domestic violence as being categorized as 'husband-wife business' (Lazarus-Black, 2003, p. 994). Even when charges are filed, government-funded organizations are too overstressed and overburdened to manage the number of domestic violence cases that end up in the system. Many cases are not taken seriously by police officers after the matter is reported by the victim (Lazarus-Black, 2003, p. 982). According to Lazarus-Black (2001), Trinidad and Tobago's Domestic Violence Act continues to be criticized by victims of violence as victims "struggle to gain access to and recognition from the dominant institutions that often contribute to their everyday oppression" (p. 389).

In 2013, the Honourable Ms. Marlene Coudray, Minister of Gender, Youth, and Child Development of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago aligned herself with the statement delivered by the distinguished representatives of Fiji on behalf of the Group of 77 and China; Cuba on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC); and Guyana on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) that Trinidad and Tobago has introduced a broad spectrum of measures to counterbalance violence against women (Permanent Mission of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, 2013). Some of these measures, she argued, include legislation to prevent domestic violence, to punish those who commit such crimes, and provide remedies for those affected (Permanent Mission of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, 2013). However, less than two years later, on July 30th, 2014 the Trinidad *Express* published an article titled “Domestic Violence a Big Problem: Minister: Thousands of cases in court...” (Fraser, M. 2014, July 30). The article said that in 2012-2013 one court in North Trinidad handled 17, 748 domestic violence cases. At the same time, another article highlighted in the Trinidad & Tobago *Newsday* titled “12, 106 domestic violence cases filed,” (Maraj, L. 2012, November 24), which reported that domestic violence continues to be a significant problem, and that the measures brought forward by the Honourable Ms. Coudray need to be revisited as “these figures should be a concern for all,” (Trinidad & Tobago *Newsday*, Maraj, L. 2012, November 24), and that more should be done to ensure that the implementation of the Domestic Violence Act is enforced by all.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The review of this literature begins with Danna and Parsad (1989) study on *Domestic Violence in the Caribbean: A Guyana Case Study* in understanding the role colonization plays with domestic violence. From this point, literature is explored from a Caribbean perspective on domestic violence particularly focusing on domestic violence in Trinidad and Tobago.

Before going into exploring the roots of domestic violence, it is important to understand how the literature defines it. Griffith, et al. (2006) describes domestic violence as behaviours associated with hitting, choking, burning, poisoning, cutting, holding someone against their will, starving, and emotional, financial, and religious and/or spiritual and/or psychological abuse. Davis (2006) agrees with Griffith, et al., (2006) and extends this definition to include behaviours that “intimidate, manipulate, humiliate, isolate, frighten, terrorize, coerce, threaten, blame, hurt, injure, or wound someone” (Davis, 2006, p. 46). Smith (1989) defines domestic violence as a violent offence committed in the context of an intimate relationship. It is characterized as acts of violence, power, and coercion with the intention to control the behaviour of another person (Smith, 1989). Violence, as it stands, forms an integral aspect in shaping how people either respond or learn from dominance. In some systems of authority, power, force, and threats are used as a source of control (Dobash & Dobash, 1988). In most cases, feminists argue that violence grows out of the inequality in marriages and reinforces the positions of dominance and subordination in and outside of the home (Yllo, 2005).

“Domestic Violence with Black Families: A Study of Wife Abuse in Guyana.”

Danns and Parsad (1988)

Danns and Parsad (1989) argue in their article that individuals develop an orientation to violence by means of socialization. The authors acknowledge that domestic violence is acquired by social learning, as well as the social conditioning. Danns and Parsad (1989) also argue that violence against women fosters a “nature of violence” (p. 23) within Caribbean society. This “culture of violence” (Brereton, 2010, p. 2) can be traced back to the history of violence through slavery and indentureship among African and Indian families’. While the passing of slavery and indentureship within the Caribbean has witnessed a reduction in the range of legalized violence, violence remains endemic to this Island society. This has resulted in women and children vulnerable to the accepted use of violence as a means of resolving conflict and maintaining dominance and control (Brereton, 2010). The article highlights that violence against women stems from a multiplicity of factors, such as: (i) the tendency to treat violence against women as a private matter; (ii) the lack of laws dealing specifically with such violence; (iii) socialisation to patterns of violence; and (iv) stress brought on by economic and social pressures and substance abuse (Danns & Parsad, 1989, p. 56). The next section will review the literature on the role of colonization of domestic violence.

Colonization's Role in Domestic Violence

Taylor's 2005 article, "No Resting Place: African American Women at the Crossroads of Violence" highlights theoretical frameworks that articulate the complexities of life for African-American women and domestic violence. She explains that many theoretical frameworks include black feminist thought, which is raising black women's consciousness concerning their everyday oppression by the dominant group's epistemology (p. 1475). Collins (1989) argues that domestic violence is solidly planted in the history of colonization, and says:

...as a result of colonialism, imperialism, slavery, apartheid, and others systems of racial domination, Blacks share a common experience of oppression. These similarities in material conditions have fostered shared Afrocentric values that permeate the family structure, religious institutions, culture, and community life of Blacks in varying parts of Africa, the Caribbean, South America, and North America (Collins, 1989, p. 755).

Collins (1989) continues to observe that black woman are becoming aware and empowered by acts of resistance which challenge the dominant group's ideologies (Collins, 1989, p. 746-749) and explains how racially oppressed groups have been led to simplify causes, such as domestic violence within their society. Other feminist scholars bring forth similar arguments: Smith (2010) explains that domestic violence is addressed too loosely and poses problems in terms of understanding the experience of racialized women (p. 3). Taylor (2005) argues that westernized thinking does not recognize the history, geographic location, and cultural differences experienced by both racialized men and women, because that would force the dominant group to understand their part in the process of

colonization and how it influences and defines race, class, and gender for racialized groups (p. 1475). This is why Sokoloff's (2004) article reminds us that domestic violence and women's injustice cannot adequately be measured without considering the roots of domestic violence based on history, socio-economic status, race and ethnicity, and location in the world. More importantly, Davis (2006) stresses that domestic violence has a tendency to affect all aspects of family life, including children who witness domestic violence who are at a higher risk of carrying those emotional, social, and functional behaviours into their adulthood.

Domestic violence in the Caribbean has had an opportunity to flourish by way of patriarchy, gender inequality, and nationalism (Muturi & Donald, 2006; Abraham, 1995; and Morrow, 1994) which continue to divide ethnic groups in Trinidad and Tobago through the social ideas of masculinities (Sukhu, 2013) and competing ethnic narratives (Brereton, 2010). For instance, Afrocentric narratives tend to highlight slavery, emancipation, religion, and culture, whereas, Indocentric narratives highlight hard-working, educated labourers who were tricked or forced to immigrate on a promise of a better life (Brereton, 2010). These colonial and political narratives tend to 'pit' one group (Afro) against the other (Indo) by the government in maintaining power and control subordination over ethnic groups (Brereton, 2010).

Brereton (2010) acknowledges that it would be impossible to ignore 'nationalism' and the ethnic identities which have constructed different narratives about the past and continue to influence the present. Trinidad and Tobago have

struggled to create a universal story that captures the history of this fragmented nation. Trinidad and Tobago's identities have developed out of conflicts: ethnic division, nationalist identities, cultural exclusion, marginalization, and gender inequality (Yelvington, 2010). The trauma of slavery and indentureship has left behind these processes of "culture wars" (Murdoch, 2009) within a multiethnic nation where every person and every group continues to fight for recognition, power, and control (Brereton, 2010). The colonizers have created a system of ethnic hierarchy based on colourism (Potter et al., 2010) and on skin tone, as well as features which reflect common characteristics amongst colonizers. Dupont and Sokoloff's (2005) point of view of domestic violence and colonization is explained as "simultaneous, multiple, and interlocking oppressions of an individual" (p. 39), thus creating a division through status, class, ethnicity, region and/or gender (Ramsaran, 2001).

The history of colonization and post-colonial actions opened up conflict narratives associated with French Creole, British imperialist, and nationalists' political movements, which saw a time for national independence (Brereton, 2010). Brereton's (2010) article, "All ah we is not one," highlights the People's National Movement (PNM), which called for descendants of the enslaved, indentured labourers and those who shared the island to join a new and united nation under the sun (to be known as Mother Trinidad and Tobago). She indicates that Dr. Eric Williams (founder of the PNM) wrote a declaration of independence in the *History of the People of Trinidad and Tobago*, published in 1962 (Brereton, 2010). This

declaration expressed to the people of Trinidad and Tobago that “this will be their final emancipation from slavery; this will be their final demonstration that slavery is not nature” (cited in Brereton, 2010, p. 221), however, French Creoles, Indians, mixed ethnicities, and some Spanish ‘whites’ that made up the nation state disagreed with Dr. Williams’ call for one Mother Trinidad and Tobago (Brereton, 2010). Dr. Williams and the PNM were accused of pushing a ‘black power’ agenda (Brereton, 2010, p. 227). Brereton (2010) explains that the “cultural domain” was one in which Afro-Creole narratives denigrated African elements in the Creole mix and the hegemonic culture was “Afro-Saxon” rather than “African.” The literature argues that the “...movement triggered a lively public discourse on values, ideology, and history in Trinidad and Tobago” (Brereton, 2010, p. 227).

In post-colonial Trinidad and Tobago, Afrocentric and Indocentric men have sought to impose the practice of patriarchy, which they have witnessed at the hands of colonial settlers, and pass it down through communities and families by means of intergenerational trauma (Murdoch, 2009). Brereton (2010) documents the historical evolution of what she describes as a “culture of violence” in Trinidad and Tobago, constructed by the hand of their colonizers and mentally internalized by the colonized, and shows how this has contributed to the creation of masculinities, leaving men feeling emasculated and fragmented (Potter, Conway, & Barnard, 2010), and therefore, contributing to the issues of domestic violence and many other social injustices against women and men. Afrocentric and Indocentric groups have tried to assume masculine and patriarchal pre-eminence by way of

hierarchical differentiation within Trinidad and Tobago's social structure.

Brereton's (2010) article presents the notion of colonial 'jockeying' between indigenous people (the "Caribs"), Indo-Trinidadians and some African, non-Creoles for positions within society. However, the polyethnic prisms of colours created and reinforced by the British nationalists (Brereton, 2010) have failed to recognize "French and Spanish Creoles, Indians, malatos" (Brereton, 2010, p. 219-221). For decades, women have been significantly excluded even after the independence of Trinidad and Tobago (Rowley, 1998). Women were not allowed full or equal access to the labour market, (Reddock, 1994) or to own property, manage their own finances, marry men of their choice or have ownership over their own body and reproductive system (Meade & Wiesner-Hank, 2008). The patriarchal ideas and power of colonization have contributed to a mentality of seeing women as unequal in society (Ramsaran, 2001), and reduced women to living under men and equivalent to cattle (Siegel, 2005).

Muturi and Donald (2006) argue that domestic violence is an attempt by men to reclaim their masculinity by mean of aggressive behaviours and control. Albert Bandura's theoretical framework of social learning theory (SLT) supports the notion that early exposure to violence is not only learned from experience, but also from observation (Anderson & Kras, 2007). Therefore, men from Trinidad and Tobago have perpetuated a cycle of violence that stems from colonization. Gonzales, Simard, Baker-Demaray, and Eyes (2014) found that it is important to recognize the devastation that colonization has effected on the people colonized.

Contributing to dividing lines between men and women, colonizers and the colonized, ‘inferior’ vs. ‘superior’ resulting in a form of internalized oppression. Poupart’s (2003) article “The Familiar Faces of Genocide: Internalized oppression among American Indians” also speaks to the ‘internalized oppression’ that has eroded cultural identities and manifested itself in domestic violence and violence within communities. Throughout history, the colonizer does not lighten his oppression, nor seek to hide this domination over the colonized. This can be viewed through the discriminatory policies and discourse of Trinidad and Tobago (Fanon, 1952, Poupart, 2003). The colonial experience has created a disenfranchised people frustrated and still in search of lost fragments of cultural roots that are deemed necessary for the ‘formation of person’ (Khan, 2001 p.1). Mohammed (1994) articulates that the legacy of colonization on the islands has left the colonized man with a shared desire to have power and control; they perceive women as their possessions, just as the Afro or Indo- *Trinbagonian* males felt like property under the dominant settler groups during colonial and political nationalism. Without generalizing, recent studies on men’s violence conducted by Sukhu (2013) with Caribbean men, reported that men felt that their masculinity, power, and dominance was threatened by their female counterpart’s desire to redress the power imbalance and structural inequalities. Scholars like Cain (1995) and Zellerer (2000) have supported the notion of colonization as a contributing factor to domestic violence among men and women from the Caribbean. These authors emphasize the need to examine all forms of inequality that were imposed

by the hands of the colonizers, such as racism, class privilege, and heterosexism, which intersect with gender oppression and the construction of an individual's identity (Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005).

The Colonized Confusion: Melting Pot of Ethnic Identities and Masculinity

Trinidad and Tobago's society is known as the 'melting pot' of the Caribbean. The two largest segments of the population have witnessed in recent decades a development in language and attitude around identity that is reflective of an 'Afrocentric' narrative or Afro-Trinbagonian and an 'Indocentric' narrative, as Indo-Trinbagonian identity (Brereton, 2010, p. 218-220). These identities have subsequently been challenged by those representing themselves as 'mixed-ethnicity' or mixed-Trinbagonian (Brereton, 2010). Over the last century, there has been major shifting around ethnicity politics on the two islands. In thinking on the matter, I was reminded of Sampath's (1997) study "Crab-in-a-Bucket: reforming male identities in Trinidad," where two dominant groups climb and pull inside a bucket, each attempting to drag down the other and stop them from getting to the top. We see this happening in family homes and communities of Trinidad and Tobago as a form of domestic violence. Instead of finding common ground in their colonial history, differences are magnified and used in creating social and structural hierarchies (Ramsaran, 2001). Two islands once known as the Caribbean 'melting pot' have taken up the colonial language, stereotypes, racist tendencies, and violent measures imposed during colonialism (Potter, Conway & Bernard, 2010).

Although, many people of Trinbagonian descent have embraced a multicultural/multi-diverse identity, meaning a process of cultural, racial, linguistic, and other ethnic mixtures (Tanikella, 2003), there appears to be a constant ‘pull’ for individuals to identify with one group or another but not both. Plaza (2006) also argues that forced multiculturalism can be understood as a stage in the immigration life cycle; a process that can be characterized by the constant shifting and assembling of new hybridized identities (p. 207). The influences of colonization have blurred the lines of a ‘genuine’ Caribbean identity among the people, and the ‘collective’ has been broken down (Plaza, 2006, p. 214). For example, the old proverb says that “it takes an entire village to raise a child,” with everyone working together for the betterment of the community. In post-colonial Trinidad and Tobago neighbours and families working side by side and helping each other out, looking after each others’ children and keeping each other safe have been replaced with “individualistic, selfishness presented as ‘none of my business” (Griffith et al., 2006, p.770), which over time has led to an increase in domestic violence between men and women as no one is accountable and responsible for each other. As such, Trinidad and Tobago values, beliefs, and identities have shifted and changed to resemble the dominant Eurocentric landscape of a nation and people in values, attitudes, and appearances, and so has violence in the home.

Hall (1990) reports that colonial presence in the Caribbean interrupted the transformation of entire nations by highlighting ‘difference’ and introducing the question of power (p.232). Furthermore, through colonization, social, political, and

economic divisions have been constructed around ‘colourism,’ described as the favouritism shown to those having a lighter skin complexion (light skin versus dark skin). These are binaries that were forced upon the people of the Caribbean, especially in Trinidad and Tobago, to consent to the dominant group’s desire to eradicate ‘blackness’ out of the Caribbean people to reflect a more Eurocentric society that favours lighter skin tones as ‘superior’. Colourism continues to be used as a marker of class, and/or class difference among Trinbagoians. It is used as an indicator of political power and race, and has constructed racism among those sharing a Caribbean identity and division between individuals who share a common history (Williams, 2011). It needed recasting and I think that reflects the argument is that ‘colourism’ and the socioeconomic system further emasculated the Afrocentric male, which resulted from the product and power of white masculinity, and the master/slave dichotomy (Sukhu, 2013). This has been engrained within the system and has greatly impacted gender identities and relations among men and women and Afro-Trinbagonian and Indo-Trinbagoians identity for centuries.

Plummer (2013) articulates that many men have a preoccupation with masculinity and its relationship to sexuality. This obsession with maleness and sex is a result of colonizers’ oppression of Afro-Caribbean men asserting power over racialized bodies (Fanon, 1952; Sokoloff and Dupont, 2005). Fanon (1952) argues that in order for the black man to be black, he must do so in relation to the white man. Trinidad and Tobago men take pride in using their masculinity over women, in showing other men how masculine they are by the number of sexual encounters

they have with women. In some cases, a man obtains adulthood and male status by engaging in premarital, as well as extramarital sexual relations with women (Wilson, 1969). This has left men in Trinidad and Tobago fragmented by the internal fear of being dominated and feeling inadequate, powerless, and worthless. Hadeed and Lee (2010) explain that when men feel their masculinity threatened or further oppressed, a fear overcomes them and the male ego steps in to fight for their alpha status in their society. Through years of colonial oppression, the Caribbean male identity has internalized the structural framework that is set up to recognize ‘white’ bodies as superior to ‘Afrocentric’ bodies and therefore creating a system of social inequality that has been learned through centuries of slavery and indentured servitude (Sokoloff, 2005).

Domestic Violence and Gender Role Change

Although women in Trinidad society have made strides towards independence, traditional gender roles have prevented women from achieving full citizenship because of cultural attitudes, role expectations, and unequal distribution of power between men and women in a patriarchal society. Many women are largely still viewed as childbearers and nurturers. Certain gender roles are expected to be filled by women within their lifetime and there is pressure from men on women to conform to these gender roles that maintain women’s submissiveness and subordinate status

Many women are socially aware of the economic and social injustices that they face within Trinidad and Tobago's society. There is a significant imbalance in the social power relations between the sexes, where femininity, by societal standards, defines women as fragile and lacking in muscular strength. The outcome is such that female bodies are socially constructed to be seen as weak and able to offer little resistance to physical abuse and physical abuse of women by men, i.e. domestic violence (Bartky 1992).

The 'inferiorization' of women throughout history has made it difficult for women's voices to be respected and heard over the dominant patriarchal culture of men, especially the voices of poor women and women of colour (Sokoloff, 2004). Therefore, making spaces for women's voices to be both represented and heard is important, in particular, women from diverse or racialized groups who are often ignored. Within our patriarchal institutions, social location and cultural background still focus on the structural inequalities, such as race, gender, class, and sexuality which continues to shape the lives of "battered women" (Sokoloff, 2005). The male-dominated society of the Caribbean has created injustices through patriarchal power that continue to exist and marginalize women in regions such as Trinidad and Tobago (Reddock, 2004).

Bent-Goodley (2001) contends that women from various cultural, religious, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic groups, as well as racialized, people of colour, and African-American communities continue to be ignored in domestic violence literature. Taylor (2005) states that it is not unusual for women of colour

to encounter institutional racism in the service delivery system as they seek support after experiencing domestic violence. Yet the intersection of gender violence and cultural violence towards African-American women has received limited attention from the research community, much less women from Caribbean nations. Krane et al. (2000) reflect on the lack of empirical research around ethnoracial groups and argue that “the dearth of empirical exploration has contributed to situations in which the needs of women from the dominant culture are assumed to apply universally” (p. 2) even when addressing the needs of women of colour. Such scholars state that this practice used to examine violence against women has a tendency to rely on concepts derived from research conducted with white populations rather than seeking to explore domestic violence cross-culturally (Krane et al., 2000)

Narayan’s (2013) article, “Dislocating Culture: Identities, Traditions, and Third-World Feminists” draws attention to the problematic ways in which ‘culture’ is invoked in explanations of forms of violence against Third-World women. She demonstrates, by way of example, how dowry murders “get represented as instances of ‘death by culture’ while analogous forms of violence in western contexts, such as domestic violence murders, often do not” (Narayan, 1999, p. x) Likewise, Narayan (2013) observes the “marked tendency to proffer ‘cultural explanations’ for problems within communities of color within Western contexts more readily than... to proffer ‘cultural explanations’ for similar problems within mainstream Western communities” (p. 87). Importantly, the research warns against

“the decontextualization and reframing that occur when Third-World feminist issues cross over into Western national contexts” (Narayan, 2013, p. 84). Narayan (2013) compares feminist attention to general issues of domestic violence in the United States to ‘Indian feminists’ work to show how national contexts specify ways in which feminist issues get articulated among racialized groups.

Sokoloff and Dupont (2005) argue that the links between domestic violence and gender roles are complex and culturally specific and required further attention. The authors acknowledge that individuals’ lived experiences have to be taken into consideration, along with multiple and interlocking oppressions rooted in colonialism, which can significantly increase the risk of domestic violence in certain social locations and cultural backgrounds (Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005, p. 39). Over the last decade, domestic violence on the islands of Trinidad and Tobago has come under scrutiny, and local organizations have created networks to address and end violence against women in their communities. Before the Domestic Violence Act (1991), women on the islands had very little support from policies and organizations to turn to for help in ending their abuse. Institutions such as the Trinidad and Tobago Coalition for Violence against Women (1988) and Families in Action (1988), formed in an effort to address a growing problem of drug addiction, have made domestic violence one of their priorities. The two organizations are governed by mandates to provide support and services to women facing violence in Trinidad and Tobago. For many women who call Trinidad and Tobago home, domestic violence remains a daily struggle. Rawlins and Crawford (2006) state

that despite the enacting of the Domestic Violence Act (1991) women continue to be maimed and killed in acts of domestic violence in Trinidad and Tobago.

Gaps in Domestic Violence Literature

The literature reviewed through this chapter has brought attention to the issue of domestic violence. However, Krane, Oxman-Martinez, and Ducey (2000) ask: By acknowledging we are ending violence against women, is bringing attention enough? Especially, when some literature fails to address the tension which exists around which scholarly journals are seeking to represent women and these issues (Poupart, 2003). One of the tensions is the idea that domestic violence literature tends to uphold the voices from a White European-American, middle-class, heterosexual woman, thereby omitting the voices of racialized women and/or women of colour. It also relies on theoretical frameworks that further exclude victims. Another tension is the need for advancement in cultural competency when exploring domestic violence outside the westernized lens and the interventions that can be applied among women of colour or racialized women who are educated, middle-class, heterosexual women or women who self-identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, or queer (LGBTQ) (Pearson, 2005; Tanikella, 2003; and Poupart, 2003). Some journals reviewed had a tendency to assimilate the experiences of women enduring domestic violence under a theoretical feminist framework that largely encompasses the voices of the western dominant population without taken into consideration cultural competencies and intersectionalities that are rooted within a system that sustains violence (Taylor, 2005). Other literature

failed to include voices of women who face violence daily within a system that creates external barriers through labels and stereotypes (Tanikella, 2003). This perceived judgement tended to discourage women, especially racialized women, from reporting violent incidents just to face further stereotyped beliefs and attitudes surrounding certain groups that already face racial discrimination and social injustices (Taylor, 2005). Therefore, many women found solace in their silence rather than being re-victimized by research that claimed to understand the plight of racialized women.

There is an interpretation from the literature presented that there is a ‘me’ verses ‘them’ mentality as domestic violence is more or less important when ‘white’ women were more likely to seek assistance from friends and access to shelters than women of colour. Therefore, my research study aims to contribute to the scholarly research by giving women who have been socially racialized and marginalized by society the platform to voice their experience towards ending domestic violence. The next chapter will discuss my research design and methodology as I examined the experiences of domestic violence of women in the Caribbean.

Chapter 3: Methodology

A qualitative research design has been used to centre the voices of Trinidad and Tobago women in understanding domestic violence (Kreuger & Neuman, 2006). Using qualitative research allows for issues such as colonization, oppression, discrimination etc. to be further explored as it raises consciousness, and it provides an opportunity to change lives. The methodology which frames this research is guided by a critical feminist lens to explore domestic violence as a contributing factor and to examine how organizations respond to the demands of women enduring domestic violence. In addition, a Critical Social Science (CSS) perspective (Carter & Little, 2007) contributes to understanding the root cause of domestic violence and how violence was used by colonizers to gain ‘power’ and ‘control’ (Cain, 1995; Danna & Parsad, 1989). Therefore, the research questions that frame this study are: (a) what are some of the contributing factors that sustain domestic violence in Trinidad and Tobago, and (b) how do organizations respond to the demands of women enduring domestic violence.

Research Design

Prior to traveling to Trinidad and Tobago, I contacted Ms. Raquel Sukhu, part-time lecturer at University of the West Indies, St Augustine Campus; Ms. Sherna J.A. Alexander Benjamin, President/ Coordinator of the Organization for Abused and Battered Individuals (O.A.B.I.); and Ms. Oraine R. Ramoo, M.Ed, CTT, BFRP to form a committee in the communities I would be working in. This purpose of this committee was to provide guidance of the Caribbean culture, gain

support from the community, and receive assistance in recruiting women for this study. The committee members agreed to oversee the research in Trinidad and Tobago from an ethical and cultural perspective. One of the local committee members thought that I could benefit from a softer and more welcoming recruitment protocol if I conducted information seminars such as: Trauma and Resiliency; Domestic Violence; and Relationship Attachment, just to name a few. These information seminars would allow women to engage with various topics and ask questions in a safe setting. The opportunity allowed me to reacquaint myself within the culture and people of Trinidad and Tobago. Also, this allowed the women to begin to establish trust and a sense of safety; if they decided to participate in the study, then these women would have a sense of who the researcher was and the nature of the research. This study was approved by McMaster's Ethics Board (See Appendix G).

Recruitment Process

I traveled to Trinidad and Tobago in April 2015. Immediately following my arrival in the country, my advisory committee assisted me in making contacts through an email poster campaign, which was launched through local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (See Appendix E). The purpose of this recruitment was seeking women to attend the information seminars and to participate in my domestic violence study. Working alongside two local committee members, I conducted the information seminars at local library branches and government organizations in Trinidad and Tobago. The attendees at the seminars

were domestic violence survivors, victims of domestic violence, employers of local domestic violence organizations, a Human Resource department head, advocates, and students from the university. The seminars informed the locals about the research being conducted in the area of domestic violence. Interested women were welcomed to contact me through the recruitment poster (See Appendix E). Also, during the seminar, the interview guide (See Appendix C) was handed out to each attendee for review with an opportunity to ask questions about the research or the final report. After each seminar presentation, I was available to answer questions about the research and provide recruitment posters (See Appendix E).

I facilitated seven information seminars over a six-week period. The topics covered were the following:

- Domestic violence and culture;
- Trauma and resiliency;
- Domestic violence in Trinidad and Tobago;
- Women's empowerment;
- Relationship attachment;
- Women role in the labour market; and
- Emotional intelligence.

For additional connection, NGOs and service providers assisted in the promotion of the information seminars with approximately 40 women responding to the recruitment poster (See Appendix E) and community referrals. For those women who wanted to participate in my research study, I screened over the telephone and provided an overview of: time commitment, meeting location; and sample questions, and attained verbal consent (See Appendix C).

The University of the West Indies, St Augustine campus, the Institute for Gender and Development Studies assisted in steps to preserve the women's confidentiality by providing a private office on campus in Trinidad and Tobago to conduct the interviews. To ensure confidentiality throughout this research, I assigned an alias name to each woman who participated in this research. Also, I generalized the location of each woman to one of two islands, Trinidad or Tobago. The women who agreed to participate in the study signed a Letter of Consent (See Appendix A) prior to starting the interview. The research provided each woman with a stipend of \$54TT for travel expenses, and the women could keep this stipend even if they decided to withdraw from the research.

Women in the Study

A total of 10 women participated in this research. Five identified as Afro-Trinidadians, two identified as Indo-Trinidadians, and three identified as Mixed-Trinidadians. These women were from a cross-section of class, status, and geographical location in Trinidad and Tobago. The age demographic ranged from

23 to 55. Each woman indicated that she had lived with her partner for a period of time (two to 10+ years) at some point during their relationship. However, it is important to note that not all the participants indicated the number of years within their relationship. Some were more open to responding that they were in a long-term relationship for years. Table 1.1 provides a glimpse of the ten women.

Table 1.1 Characteristics of the Women in the Study

Women	Age	Identification	Status	Employment Status	Location
Joslyn	38	Afro	Common-Law	Full-time	Trinidad
Kathy	41	Indo	Widow	Part-time	Tobago
Jennifer	23	Indo	Single	Full-time	Trinidad
Lisa	34	Mixed	Single	Full-time	Tobago
Samina	23	Mixed	Single	Full-time	Trinidad
Ingrid	26	Afro	Married	Full-time	Tobago
Stephanie	35-55	Afro	Common-Law	Full-time	Trinidad
Carol	55	Mixed	Divorced	Part-time	Tobago
Shelly	25	Afro	Married	Full-time	Trinidad
Brittney	45-55	Afro	Married	Full-time	Tobago

Data Collection

There were no withdrawals from the research, and all the participants were willing to sign the letter consent form (see Appendix A). I conducted face to face interviews that lasted approximately 90-180 minutes. The interviews were transcribed verbatim. Additionally, analytic memo notes (Kruger & Neuman, 2006) on the activities and observations of the day were recorded to keep track of my thoughts and ideas. These memo notes were incorporated into my data analysis to be discussed in the following section. It was during these times that my

reflections and observations of the culture would happen, and they made it much easier for me to get a sense of the women of Trinidad and Tobago and their experience with domestic violence.

Analysis of the Data

An outsider/insider perspective.

While conducting this research, my goal was to remain genuine and authentic (Carter & Little, 2007) to the stories I was hearing. I came to the research with certain privileges of being an Insider (born Trinbagonian), but was recognized as an Outsider because I have lived my adult life in Canada. Although I was familiar with the culture of Trinidad and Tobago, I was aware that there was a subculture of dialects and customs which was not known to me (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). In my ethics application, I made it known that I belong to the location in which I was researching and it was important for me to situate myself in this research. I did not want to make assumptions by allowing my westernized lens to influence the data or the categories that were emerging from within this research. Dwyer and Buckle (2009) explain that “...there is no neutrality. There is only a greater or less awareness of one’s biases” (p.55). Upon reflection of Dwyer and Buckle’s (2009) quote, I agreed with the authors that my insight on the culture prevented me from being completely neutral in my assessment of domestic violence in Trinidad and Tobago due to my experience as a child. I have to be more mindful of my biases or at least be aware of them based on my acculturation into a

westernized way of being and existing. I have spent more years in Canada than I have spent in the country that I still describe as “home.” It is not my intention to argue that being an insider granted special privilege; it simply allowed for a different perspective, such as understanding local dialects and a cultural interpretation of how domestic violence is perceived by some that might not be present for someone from a different background (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). Aware of possible biases with this research, I began my data analysis by making sense of the data (interviews and memo notes) and began organizing these women’s stories into themes and categories.

I printed the transcripts and reviewed each story line by line, pulling various words and phrases as code themes (Kreuger & Neuman, 2006), writing notes and key words in the margin. I also went through my memo notes looking for key words and themes, and placed them in the margins. I went back and colour-coded the themes with brightly coloured pens. As I reviewed the data, questions arose, which I wrote on colourful sticky notes next to the relevant category or theme (Kreuger & Neuman, 2006). Then I compared the codes in the margins from the transcripts with my memo notes and looked for connections from within the data for common patterns and themes (Kreuger & Neuman, 2006). In the end, I used the prevalent themes from the transcripts, which created the findings in the next chapter.

Chapter 4: Findings

The findings from this study are categorized by my two research questions. First, what are the contributing factors that sustain domestic violence in Trinidad and Tobago? And second, how do organizations respond to the demands of women enduring domestic violence?

The response to my first question revealed a number of themes in which many of the women defined domestic violence and abuse in various ways. Women I spoke to viewed domestic violence as ‘visible yet invisible,’ part of a social structure created through patriarchy, which imposed power and control and gave men privilege resulting from colonization (slavery and indentureship). The women also spoke about how domestic violence is still very much a ‘private’ matter in which women still suffer in silence and will not report the incidents. The women’s stories also revealed the attitudes and behaviours which fostered an ‘internalized oppression,’ which both men and women have normalized and pass down from generation to generation. Many of the women defined domestic violence as love, allowing men to use their power to control their reproductive health and overall independence. I heard women speak about leaving the labour force because their husband or common-law partner had gotten them pregnant. Women revealed from their stories the division of skin tone, ‘light skin/’dark skin.’ As I analyzed the women’s responses from my second research question, the women’s stories brought forth themes of re-victimizing women, and they include: systems (policies);

authorities (police); and domestic violence services. I will share the findings from my research.

Domestic Violence: “Visible, yet Invisible”

Throughout all the interviews and information seminars the echoing consensus by women in Trinidad and Tobago is that ‘culture’ tolerates and yet condones domestic violence. Women’s issues on the islands are not taken seriously by the courts and sometimes not even by other women in the community. Women in my research mentioned that issues that affect them are being overlooked, leading many women to keep their abuse silent even though they may be advocating for the rights of women in the public sphere. The women I spoke to agreed that efforts have been made to make domestic violence visible; however domestic violence is still invisible in many areas of these two islands. These women talked about when a woman was killed by her abuser, and how public attention regarding domestic violence made the headlines. *Samina* recounted a recent incident that demonstrates the visible, yet invisible issues of domestic violence. She shared that a well-known TV personality in Trinidad who advocated for women’s rights chose not to disclose her personal struggle with domestic abuse. Her abuse became know to the public when she was stabbed numerous times, her throat slit, and her body set on fire in her bed, allegedly by her husband. *Samina* shared her shock around the news:

Marcia Henville...she actually had a programme, more or less a foundation to make people aware of it [domestic violence]...Yeah, well, it’s believed that her husband slit her throat several times and set her on fire. I try not to look at it too much because I am terribly aware, and the very fact that these

things used to happen to me as well. So, I try to not dwell too much as it's also triggering. Especially because of the kind of person she was... one of those who are making domestic violence awareness in the country out there. So it was a little bit scary, but yeah, she was good apparently. (*Samina, 2015*)

Carol also spoke about the visible, yet invisible to the point where women would not help out other women even if they knew they were experiencing domestic violence.

The man next door would beat his wife, and a couple of doors down we would see the woman running out of the house naked... Then some women would say, 'if you don't hit me you don't love me.' Because I had a sister-in-law like that. One of my brothers saw his father beating our mom. With all these that I went through I could look back now and see his father beat our mom; that's why he knew how to beat his wife. (*Carol, 2015*)

While women tried to ignore what other women were experiencing in their homes, both men and women viewed domestic violence as love and what you have to do to show that love, which is passed down from parents to children. *Lisa* confirms that violence happens, but the attitude of the people does not foster change. "There's always conversations, but at the end of the day...nothing changes... the violence continues, it goes on and on. The women keep going back..." (*Lisa, 2015*) *Jennifer* shared her views of domestic violence and the visible, yet invisible:

...the level is so high in Trinidad, every year, you think that the year will start off fresh,...you want to have new experience. It's pretty bad. Every year it's worse, the government is bad...I've had an experience with an ex of mine...I never told anyone and if anyone knew, they would know not to talk to me directly about it...(*Jennifer, 2015*)

Another woman, *Ingrid* gave her interpretation of visible, yet invisible and the lack of support from authorities:

... Yes, domestic violence is a concern... There are not things that are not in place for domestic violence for women or men, because there are men who experience domestic violence. And the thing is, when you are in a domestic violence relationship, when you go to the police they will be talking to you like, go and work it out...that is husband-wife business... Unless you get your hand cut off or your finger or you get starve or ... you need a shelter...then they'll help you. But they will be like, husband and wife they have their own thing so work it out, smash that, smash *that* [*dialect to put an end to the talk*] (*Ingrid, 2015*)

Domestic violence is a secret until it becomes public. It is a behaviour that is learned in the home, that is interpreted as love. Although there is talk and advocacy and awareness around domestic violence, usually nothing significant changes. The authorities, such as the police, see domestic violence as husband and wife business and the victim is encouraged to “smash” that or “let it go and not ruin the man’s life.” While domestic violence is a visible, yet invisible matter – it is also viewed as a private matter.

“Private matter.”

Domestic violence is considered hidden or perceived as someone else’s problem, never theirs. Many women experiencing such violence do not disclose in public or private that they are experiencing violence in their own homes. It may be spoken about, but usually it’s someone else’s problem. The women I spoke to shared that the majority of women in Trinidad and Tobago are beaten and/or abused on a daily basis, and within earshot of neighbours, family, and friends. For the

majority, no one does anything to help, and nothing is done, even in situations when the police may have been called. Many of these women make the conscious decision to not get involved in “husband-wife business” and believe that domestic violence is a private matter.

The women I spoke to responded that going to the police is “more times than not, a waste of time” (*Shelly, 2015 and Joslyn, 2015*). Often the police and the victim decide to “let him go” because the battered and bruised woman “feels sorry for him.” *Shelly* and *Lisa* expressed that domestic violence is a known occurrence, but no one does anything. *Shelly* shares her views of domestic violence as a private matter:

...it’s an issue that, is very, is prominent, but yet hidden. Prominent meaning neighbours would know that the husband beat the wife that evening. Or that the husband hurt the wife, and yet they hush their mouth and they don’t say anything. And then when you go to the authorities, there’s no proper structure program or other structure that helps immediately... (*Shelly, 2015*)

There is an innate ability to cover up the violence occurring in the home due to shame on their family. Domestic violence has become a normal occurrence in the home, and within the community. Women tend to see going to the authorities, such as the police as a “waste of time” and they internalize it instead of seeking help.

Samina shared that “women choose to cover it up...they remain...they take it because of the children, finances, LOVE or it’s just a way of life for them”.

Other women interpreted domestic violence as being normalized and “second

nature.” It happens all the time and it is part of the culture and is reinforced by direct and indirect messages, passed down from one generation to the next. From my observation and interaction with the people of Trinidad and Tobago, it is uncouth to “air your dirty laundry for the whole world to see.”

“Internalize it.”

Many women have come to accept that there is violence in their relationship and many have internalized or associated domestic violence with love or a sense of belonging. The women I spoke with described this as “culturally and socially” accepted. *Jennifer* shared that domestic violence was “normal... it’s what I grew up with it. It still affects me.” Consistently, all the women expressed in their stories that many of them suffer in silence, where the constant threat of violence began to impact their overall mental health.

...verbal violence, family violence, it’s actually normal... When I was about 15 going on 16, I started to suffer with anxiety and depression. I was treated and stuff... but I think the level of everyday quarreling and fighting; there’s always something loud. Something loud is always happening at home. And I think I started to worry...’internalized it’ a lot... (*Jennifer, 2015*)

Carol explains how domestic violence is not discussed after it happens, and family brush it under the rug, or the person who is trying to help gets blamed and silenced.

... And he [my brother] would come charging up at me and we [mother, and sister] would end up physically fighting him trying to get in through my door to come get his wife. And next day she [brother’s wife] would go back. And then they [brother and wife] would blame me. So I would always say when two heads on the pillow you out in the cold, so be careful. And she [brother’s wife] would drop words, she would say stuff to me. I would be on my front porch and she would walk past and she would say,

‘yah’ trying to break up me marriage? All kinds of things to break up my marriage, you don’t want me to live with my husband.’ (Carol, 2015)

Comments like these spoken usually discourage those witnesses and family members from getting involved. They choose to stay silent, “keep it inside,” because getting involved just makes things worse for everyone. As a result, Carol talks about how this and many other incidents have bothered her for years, even after she moved away and ended up in her own violent relationship.

Many of the women spoke about having suffered from depression and anxiety because they have internalized the violence for a number of years. Not knowing when the violence was going to happen always kept them on edge. They never felt fully safe within their own homes but tried their best to give the appearance that all was well. Having to live behind the facade assisted in maintaining domestic violence as a private matter and normalized as love among many of the women. However, many of the women argue that domestic violence must have a constant presence because it has become a part of the culture and is swept under the rug or misinterpreted as love or a sense of belonging.

“Domestic violence equals love” (reproductive control).

The women I interviewed reported that, even when they try and move up in their career they tend to always have a bit harder time in the public sphere in a male-dominated society. These women said the labour force has a glass ceiling, saying that they have to work extremely hard to get an education, and work really hard at their jobs to get promoted. However, in the private domain of the labour

force, women argued that men continued to view women as the weaker sex, nurturers, and caregivers. The women argued that they are still being denied equal rights in the family and shared that they don't have control over their own reproductive lives either. It seems as the husband is the one who usually decides when his wife, girlfriend, or visiting partner is going to get pregnant. Shelly explains:

I started working at the airport, and he was also working at the airport, we were customer service representatives... At that time, right before that, I had gotten promotion into a new position, you know, you try to set a proper foundation before you get into having babies and all that ... From the time he met me, he wanted a baby right away... to control me... He got me pregnant shortly after we got married to tie me down... (*Shelly, 2015*)

Carol also talks about how her husband found out after they got married that she was unable to have children biologically and might have to adopt. She explained how he wanted her dead:

He would threaten me constantly that he's going to beat me... He would threaten me that 'I would shoot you.' We have a cocoa and coffee estate... So we would go together and he told me on many occasions, he would come to me and say, 'I want a divorce, I don't want you as my wife anymore.' He was always threatening, 'I don't want you. You're a cross I have to bear. Behind every man it takes a good woman and you're not it.' Mentally he would break me down. Mentally. He started to emotionally abuse me, called me stupid. 'I don't know what to do with you, you're going to make me lose money. Where did I pick you up from, stupid country girl?' He kept saying stuff to me, 'look at you, you're so skinny I need a woman with flesh that I can hold onto... give me babies' ... He kept saying that. And then I started looking at the pattern of women he kept throwing at me... (*Carol, 2015*)

All the women argued that many men on the island forego the use of condoms as it hinders their manhood. *Joslyn* shares:

... It started verbal, and then after it came the hitting. More like wanted to kick me down. So when he realized I wanted to move forward in studying that's where the abuse started... I was going to school before I got pregnant, with the last child. The last child, I was raped by him. That's how I got pregnant (*Joslyn, 2015*).

Kathy recounts her experience as she tried to gain her independence from her abusive partner. He would get her pregnant, as well as other women. His family manipulated her psychologically to maintain control even in her husband's absence. She states:

...he always had another girlfriend...he got me pregnant... my son was born and his daughter with the other girl was born nine months later... then it happened, I got pregnant again... my daughter was born nine months later after the girl he had with the other. After having my second daughter and... moving away from Tobago and coming back to Trinidad, I... started doing community work... I was trying to get water, lights in the squatting area we lived in, and we still live there because it's home... he got arrested a couple of weeks later, then I sort of moved my way into getting a job, being able to have some money. But then his sisters got very jealous of how I was being more independent and not always depending on them because society at this time like you to stay where you are and don't accept change...(*Kathy, 2015*)

The women I interviewed agreed that women in Trinidad and Tobago are expected to make money to buy the bacon, bring it home, and cook and serve the bacon to their husbands.

Most of the women interviewed spoke about women not having rights over their own bodies, and said they would endure mental and emotional abuse in their

families. They described feeling as they were disposable, treated like second class citizens in their own homes. Other women shared that violence against women is interpreted as love and that this belief is carried across generations. *Kathy* explained that, “this society has no growth...it’s brought down generation after generation, and this is what we know.” *Kathy* went on to say:

...Because fathers tell their sons, ‘you have to beat her a little bit so she can learn something.’ And women now subservient to their husbands, accept it as love. Because in generations before, especially in the Hindu culture, you get married, you go to your mother in law’s house or your husband’s house and you have to do what they give you to do. We know this. We have been taught from a young age to please our man. We don’t learn the sexual part of it but we learn the cooking, cleaning, washing... and, uh, in this society that is what is accepted as love. (*Kathy, 2015*)

There is an imaginative interpretation around domestic violence on the islands that “if you don’t beat the woman, she will not know that she is loved by her man.” This way of thinking has led to the idea that domestic violence equals love. The attitude among many is that women want to feel they are loved and when the partner acts jealous and want to control their mind, as well as their bodies, by getting them pregnant, many women view this as love and a sense of belonging. Even though, this attitude is strongly frowned upon, the idea has been exhibited in the art form of the culture, through the calypso music played and celebrated by the diverse groups of people that make up Trinidad and Tobago.

Light skin/ dark skin.

The women I spoke with shared that ethno-identities can and have become a contentious issue in Trinidad and Tobago, especially when domestic violence occurs in dating, common-law, and marriage relationships. Within Trinidad and Tobago, when domestic violence erupts, a great emphasis is placed on the ethnic composition or the “skin tone” of each partner, which would not be openly discussed if the violence hadn’t occurred. *Carol* states that, “Trinidad men need to feel important and in control.... especially if they ‘light skin’...it goes way back in slavery days.”

Marriage, for many of these women, took on elements of ethnic control where they were treated as property at the hands of their husbands or common-law partners. It is during this time when their skin colour (light or dark) would be used to demoralize and control these women.

...What women say didn’t matter, especially when you dark skin. So when I got married and I went to my husband’s house and he was telling me all this stuff ...saying this he’s saying that...like I was his property...he owns everything... And I said this can’t be like this. ...I say Ma, he think this is like bon coolie days...And she [mother] said well it’s whatever the man’s say you’re going to learn to adapt to it. (*Carol, 2015*).

Lisa, Shelly and Jennifer each go on to tell stories of times where the ethnicity of the abuser took precedence in the conversations among their family.

... The mother had an objection to me...because he is of Chinese and Negro, what we call a little more light skin than me with a little more curly hair which we call the good thing over here. So when I look back, either from day one your [his] mom had a problem with me and therefore that was something she kept bothering you [him] about... his sister got married to a

white man...it doesn't matter if he was a garbage man or bum off the street...as long as he was light skin...(Shelly, 2015)

Lisa also shared her story:

...we started living together...my parents actually did not like him because of his race, he was a dark-skin Spanish fella. So because he had Negro in him, even though I have Negro in me and my father had it in him as well...they did not like him so they [my parents] told me if I didn't break up with him they would kick me out of the house...so I broke up ten years ago and we met up ten years later and we decided to give it another shot...but then I realize things started to change...he got very abusive...(Lisa, 2015)

Jennifer recounts her experience:

...Actually I was younger, there were times when it would be so bad...my uncle and his wife were fighting and somebody may just go to the police but that was only because my family was racial. So there was a reason they didn't want her to be because she was white. I believe that is the reason they would call because they don't like her so that was an advantage for them to get her out of the house...(Jennifer, 2015)

Shelly talked about her domestic violence and ethnicity:

...Called me all the names in the world. All of a sudden I was a black old nigger. I was bitch, stupid face, bitch. All of that. This is his house, he owns this house. Um, you know, and I tried to creep on the eve of the door...and he held me, and struck me on the face here...And my entire face was swollen...(Shelly, 2015)

The depiction of 'light skin/dark skin' provides a chilling realization that the journey for women along patriarchal lines continues to create significant concerns for them, as well for men. With the ever-changing demographic composition of Trinidad and Tobago as noted earlier, many women are concerned that their ethnicity, class, and geographical location could further their oppression.

Intersections of ethnicity and location.

Joslyn stated that even though it's not said aloud, the attitudes and the lack of assistance, the stereotypes and racialization of specific areas in Trinidad is prevalent when it comes to domestic violence. She shared with me her experience when she went to the police station for assistance while pregnant after a domestic violence incident. She noted that she was from a bad area in Trinidad, which is known for having a large population of Afro-Trinidadians, as well, a high crime rate, drug violence, and high incidence of domestic violence. *Joslyn* went on to say, "police officers in this area usually do not investigate domestic violence incidences" because of the area.

Although, *Joslyn* did not state outright that her ethnicity was the reason why the police officers did not get involved, she did speak about filing a domestic violence incident report at another police station when she moved out of this "bad" part of Trinidad. In this other town, she was able to obtain a protection order against her common-law partner. The women I spoke with talked about how this is not an unusual practice by women in certain locations within the two islands and desperately trying to find support to end the abuse.

"Ripped from homeland."

Carol explained how the notion of colourism (light skin/dark skin) contributed to a "culture of violence" (Brereton, 2010) that was created on the island through colonization, slavery, and indentureship. The women in this

research argued that domestic violence stemmed back to when African people were “ripped” from their homelands and brought over to the island (Trinidad and Tobago) as slaves to work on plantations, as well as the Indian indentured servants who were “tricked” and brought over to replace the labour of African slaves after the rebellion against their colonizers.

... It goes way back in slavery days. I take it way back there. And I take it back to the African culture, I take it back to the Indian culture because I’m mixed African, Spanish, and Indian... So all the males, I grew up in my home second class. What women say didn’t matter. (*Carol, 2015*)

Many of the women’s cultural beliefs and attitudes made them believe that having a lighter skin versus a darker skin provided privilege when reporting incidences to the police or trying to access services. *Jennifer* highlights that this division was fostered through “internalized oppression,” which is a residue of colonization taught from a young age and transcends into adulthood when it comes to dating, marriage, or common-law relationships.

My first experience when it comes to racism, domestic violence... division, most of the school the popularity is Indian so I have seen where they were favoured by the teachers... and teachers make comments about children family When it comes to the teachers and the principals, most of the staff is Indian so I think you know, I have seen a number of things happen... them talking in terms of who gets awards at the end of the term... and who mother gonna get licks tonight, so when it comes to division... There is a lot of division in Trinidad... race so... domestic violence... So there was a reason they didn’t want her [sister-in-law] to be because she was white and my brother would beat her all the time... (*Jennifer, 2015*)

In the marginalized groups that make up the diversity of Trinidad and Tobago, a cultural divide is taught from a very young age that continues into

adulthood. From my many years of growing up in the culture and spending the last six weeks conducting this study, some things relating to ethnicity have not changed in Trinidad and Tobago. There is a huge influence around ethnic socialization within the culture. Many individuals within groups have internalized this colonial form of racism (Afro vs. Indo, light-tone vs. dark-tone, nice hair vs. kinky hair) without questioning its origin. Subsequently, these attitudes continue to perpetuate and maintain the interpretation of socio-political systems, which reinforce violence between men and women, within families, and within this society

The next section presents the themes and subcategories that emerged from the second research question and plays a significant role in understanding efforts in combating domestic violence on various levels and how these efforts are impacting the lives of women in Trinidad and Tobago.

Re-victimizing Women

Many women I spoke to in this research talked about the fragmented, unresponsive, and ineffective social services and protection by the authorities regarding domestic violence. *Ingrid* spoke candidly about her experience after having a protection order placed against her husband:

...So I filed a protection order against him in the courts, but after that he said he wanted to see his children. And he would come in...leave, and after that he get too comfortable...I was not with him, but he used to come and see them...and there was a day when he came and picked the door, I don't know how he did it, he picked the door and came in and stand over me while I was asleep...he said, you see how easy I could kill you... So then my son gets up...and he wanted to cut off my finger for the ring, my both

wedding rings... having a protection order didn't help me cuz the system is broken... (*Ingrid, 2015*)

Shelly shared her experience:

... [He] struck me in the face here... and my entire face was swollen. I went to the authorities [police station], and the first thing the officer asked me is... "you'll get back together." That's the first thing they tell you, uhh. "You sure, you serious about this? Are you not going to get back together? Most people does get back together." They make jokes! (*Shelly, 2015*)

After going to the police, *Shelly's* husband broke into their home and threatened her. Even with a court order he was allowed to come into her yard without any repercussions. She changed all the locks in her home, and he still got in and broke all her belongings. Women in this research talked about being confused by what they should do when they go to the authorities (police, courts, counselling or justice of the peace). They also spoke about how the police discouraged them by telling them that they are making a mistake and asked if they need to rethink before they ruin the man's life, as well as the children's. Most of the women interviewed said that at some point during the abuse and after filing protection orders, they tried to end the violence themselves. However, they still felt abused and felt a lack of hope in their lives. Some felt that attempting to kill themselves (suicide) would be a better solution than the violence they were experiencing. "...suicide has become very serious...nothing is being done [about domestic violence] so people are taking their own lives or running away." (*Samina, 2015*)

Another area the women talked about were the domestic violence services around child support. Many of the women said the courts reinforced their abuse by not enforcing judgements for child support, thus leaving women and their children

at the brink of poverty. These women described that there was little to no transparency when it came to accessing reliable services after incidents of domestic violence. Frustrated, these women shared “how [can] a woman...feel resilient or empowered when she feels like she is being attacked, not just by the batterer but by the system as well?” (*Lisa and Carol, 2015*). Women described feeling powerless, re-victimized, blamed, shamed, guilty, and scared of letting go:

...I tried to leave him after my son was born, I went to my mother’s house in Trinidad. And he came and he took the child and hold him by his neck and wanted to kill him. At that point my mom and everyone was panicking. By grace he was okay. You know, he again was trying to kick me and bite me and stuff. And then... that same night he drank poison. Police came looking for me next day...the guidance counselor blamed me because he said it’s my fault. And he still does, up to this day. (*Kathy, 2015*)

This brings up another point, in which the women I talked to said the services they receive are not enough, as they do not protect them from further harm by the abuser. Therefore, many women decide to remain silent even after reporting the abuse. They don’t feel safe and in the hopes of pacifying their abuser they try and find common ground with the abuser. Unfortunately, these women feel they have no choice in ending violence under the current system, because they are blamed or the violence is used to shame the woman even when they speak up or access service.

Institutional limitations and/or weakness.

The ineffective protection orders, shelters, and court proceedings were a real concern for the women I spoke to, despite the domestic violence legislation aimed

at protecting them from violence. Many of these women shared their frustration with the institutions in Trinidad and Tobago, such as NGOs, courts, judges, and protection orders designed to support, provide resources, and protect.

Some of the woman in this research discussed organizing at the community level a platform for victims of violence to start their own NGO and shared that “NGOs are a new thing [for tackling domestic violence] in Trinidad and Tobago.” (*Jennifer, 2015*) While another participant viewed “NGOs are run like a business; they open at 8am and close at 6pm...like domestic violence have a schedule time when it occurs.” (*Stephanie, 2015*) NGOs are expected to be at arm’s length from government ministries. However, many women in this research either did not know what these organizations did for women or believed that these organizations were “popping up and run like businesses just to get government money” (*Stephanie, 2015*). *Carol* speaks to her experience on the front lines in the community and how NGOs are not assisting victims of domestic violence.

...Information, information, information! Not only information, as printing pamphlets and giving it out. I want works. Works without faith is dead. I want you in the community... not just taking money from the government... A friend and I... we go out and we do outreach in the streets, we do outreach in the schools, I see it. We see it. I see it. They come to us. Miss, can we talk to you. Miss so and so. Miss, some neighbour. But it’s there. How can I give you information to go somewhere, when you’re not getting help? How can I take you to the police station, when you are not getting help? When I take courses, and do classes, and do first responders... Yes, the ministry is there providing these things, but when I speak to the police, when I speak to these people [NGOs] and these people don’t even know what’s going on [when they get money from the government]. They come to me for help. I feel like I don’t have it to give. I have a little, I know. Whatever I can do, I do my best...Because that’s how it starts. And little by little they will tell me and I will talk from my experience. Girl, this is what

I have been through. Girl, this is this. Girl, this is that, keep the faith...when I come across these things I would phone... [the NGOs] up and say listen, I am sending this person to you. (*Carol, 2015*)

Stephanie shared how she became so frustrated within her own community because of the inadequate services offered to domestic violence survivors that she created her own NGO for women enduring domestic violence.

...I started my own NGO...women keep calling me cuz I was invited to share my story on TV...it's been months and women keep calling me, saying that they went here and they called this place and they are not getting the help they need...so I put in papers to start my own NGO (*Stephanie, 2015*).

This is a huge trend in Trinidad and Tobago, where survivors of domestic violence are taking matters into their own hands and applying for NGO status, making media appearances, and holding fundraisers to rally for change in the system. At the same time, many of the CEOs of these NGOs and other domestic violence activists remain victims of domestic violence themselves.

...when I left my first husband, I vowed to never get into another domestic violence relationship...here I am a domestic violence survivor living in a common-law relationship with my abuser and I have a case currently in court...we live in the same house under a three year bond from the last incident...women come to me but they don't know I am still in an abusive relationship and CEO of an NGO... (*Stephanie, 2015*)

The women in my research expressed concerns that shelters run by many NGO are understaffed, have limited space, are open at unreasonable times of operation, and the criteria for support does not usually include women with older children. Almost

all the women that I interviewed encounter some kind of barriers at the community service level [NGO].

...I was six months pregnant; he beat me and took the keys. So I had nowhere to go, I was studying [at] that time. And I went to court, then went to social service, and when I went to social service they wanted to put me in a home, a [NGO] shelter, in fact. I was trying to access an HSC [government housing] home to have somewhere to live, they said they would have helped...And I went into the [NGO] shelter while pregnant ...but I was unable to take my two older children with me...there was no space...there was some sort of misunderstanding... he [abuser] called, but I didn't tell him where I was and told them I didn't tell him where I was, and he claimed he had nobody to see about [care for] the two older children... so I had to leave the shelter because the shelter did not have space...he dropped the child off to a minor...And I had to go and get her... to get them but they [shelter] didn't have room for them ...so I had to leave the shelter. (Joslyn, 2015)

Another woman in my research shared her experience with the country's 800 SAVE domestic violence "helpline" run by an NGO. "[I]...called 800 SAVE helpline...the woman had no idea what she was talking about...I felt re-victimized by the entire experience." (Samina, 2015)

Another limitation experienced by many of the women was the legislation, judiciary, and police who were no better than the government-funded NGOs. Although, Trinidad and Tobago's domestic violence legislation has had a few revisions to increase safety and protection of women in domestic violent situations, the women in my research shared that these changes had not made an impact regarding violence. Protection orders can be granted, however, they are usually not enforced. Joslyn explained, "... he broke the protection order and actually when he

beat me with the chair, he said ‘it was a pending matter in 2012 that matter is still going on’”. *Joslyn* continues to share saying:

...I had the protection [order] against him, and he had the protection [order] against me, because he lied to the court about why I lost my revolver at work...so... both of us had the protection order...when he raped me, when I called the police, they attempt to lock him up. And I told the police to let him go. (*Joslyn, 2015*)

It is not unusual for women in domestic violence relationships to align themselves with their abuser because victims convince themselves that they are unable to live without the abuser. Many domestic violence victims decide not to press charges, and return to their abuser or inform authorities to “let him go” as they justify the abuse as an accident or “he didn’t mean to hurt them,” taking the blame for the abuse.

Kathy also spoke about the inadequate legislation within the system where courts appear to treat domestic violence as an inconvenience that will eventually just go away. Cases are postponed for years until frustrated victims stop showing up to address the matter: *Kathy* recounts her sister’s case:

... She [sister] had a case but as years gone by it’s just been call, call, call. It’s just been that... its gets dismissed for another date, and dismissed for another date, and dismissed for another date... Over five years... Even as of today,...and the end of last year, she just drop the cases (*Kathy, 2015*).

Women throughout the research reiterated this frustration with the system, saying that it does not help them to resolve the abuse. These women stated that resources were limited for women enduring domestic violence, and the courts are

not doing enough to end domestic violence. Therefore, they are feeling re-victimized. It's like "we are treated like their property...like they own us." (*Lisa, 2015*)

The women from this research talk about the colonial legacy that has been passed down through the generations and how the experience of slavery and indentured servitude were imposed upon them. The women explained that this colonial treatment remains today: women are treated as their husband's property, having no or little control over their reproduction and coping with the obsession towards light skin [colourism]. Even when protection orders are granted, it either takes years to be heard by a magistrate to be enforced. Meanwhile, these women live alongside their abusers—on "pins and needles" (*Ingrid, 2015*) just waiting for the next violent episode. One woman spoke of her attempt to get support from her army supervisor, in which he responded, 'I don't care,' and when she pushed for answers, she found, "I can't question him" (*Joslyn, 2015*).

Limited housing for women facing domestic violence is a major issue in Trinidad and Tobago's social system. *Joslyn* spoke of the lack of transparency and the increased level of frustration women facing domestic violence when trying to access services.

... when we developed the relationship we got a HSC [government housing], so we both moved there. The house was in his name, because he had applied before. He had known someone there [HSC housing office] and he got an HSC house. So both of us went... That is how we end up there. We build a home together and spent time renovating and stuff because he didn't have [money]... He beat me while I was pregnant. I went to social service ...because he put me out, he beat me, and that was in July. I was six months

pregnant; he beat me and took the keys. So I had nowhere to go... [I thought it was my home too, my children's home]. No one told me he could put me out! I was trying to access an HSC home to have somewhere to live; they said they would have helped... And I went into the shelter while pregnant. I never got help towards an HSC house for me and my children... From there I went back [to the abuser] because when he called, I went back to the home again... [when we went before the judge] ...they ordered me out of the property... The property was in his name... and they ordered me out of the property, and \$1500. They said he was supposed to give me a lump sum of money. But he only gave me some and he refused to give me the rest. I have to pay a rent, and that is when I was asking social service for help. And they refused to help. (*Joslyn, 2015*)

Jennifer shared that the lack of transparency with housing either works for women trying to get out of violent situations or forces women back into domestic violence.

...The only thing I know about is the houses that are distributed by the government, and I know that takes a long time. that is very discouraging because... who you know in the ministry, who can pull up your file faster to get through. So it been like that for awhile now I think the rich become richer at the end of the day. So it's discouraging. (*Jennifer, 2015*)

The women spoke at length about the lack of responsibility showed by their partners and how gender reinforced from a very young age the dichotomy between boys and girls.

...well, boys are viewed in a more beneficial way, I should say...they are the man of the house, they carry the surname, they could have a family, they can leave a family, they can be left with certain belongings to carry it on...meanwhile, a girl, now, she has to get married, she has to follow her husband... (*Lisa, 2015*)

These women discussed that there was no accountability taken by these men for the violence in their home. Many of the women stated that domestic violence is ingrained in the systems passed down generation after generation, entrenched with

colonial attitudes, values, and beliefs that whittled down to where death or getting your “mad papers” (*Lisa, 2015*) are seen as better options than facing the daily oppression and violence in their home.

Power and Control

One of the overarching themes brought forward through this study was the power and control sought through violence. The women wanted their stories to be heard. When women report incidents of violence, the system trivializes what they have experienced. *Shelly* best explains how this idea of power and control was experienced with her partner.

...[He said] ‘This is my house, I owns this house.’ ... I tried to creep under the eave of the door, and he held me and struck me in the face ... And my entire face was swollen on this side. (*Shelly, 2015*)

Shelly shared how her partner acted out aggressively in the home to demonstrate his power.

...Um, he would shrug me...and if I’m cooking, he would pass and hit me really hard against the shoulder there and I would ask him what happened, you know that kinda thing, and he wouldn’t say a word. Right, if I cooked, it was something he didn’t like he would shove it off the table...on [to] the floor (*Shelly, 2015*)

Lisa also discusses how control can escalate in her relationship with her partner.

On one of these occasions, she was unable to go to work because of her partner.

...everything was going good. Everything was going the way I wanted it, I should say we wanted it... but then I realize that things started to change. He became possessive, manipulative. He started to make me feel like I had to account to him for everything, time, place, everything...so I started to

feel like I was a prisoner, like I had to be worried all the time...how to say something, I always had to worry if he would be angry...what he would do if he got angry and react...we'd be in the same house and we'd be on edge... certain situation and how his mood would change. The first physical violence we'd argue and he pushed me down on the bed. And it was the first time, and the way he did it I was really surprised because it was not like a push, it was more like a rough shove. And he pushed me onto the bed and I got up and stand up for him...he push me back down...he said he was playing but I realize the lashes were getting harder... and it escalated...he push me and pull me and rough me up sometimes...that was a rough day... it reached a point where he prevented me from going to work because he wrapped his legs around my waist and started to squeeze me...and...he squeeze me so bad I couldn't breathe and he grab me around my shoulders and started hold me down and squeeze me, by the time he was done my muscles were sore my...my sides were sore, my legs were sore...and when he did let me get up, I was bruised all over, I couldn't move, it was too late to go to work... (*Lisa, 2015*)

The escalation of violence was not unique to one, but common to all the women in this research. As stated earlier, the “culture of violence” (Brereton, 2010) reassures men that their behaviour and actions towards women are justified. They can walk away or move between relationships without acquiring any legal or community sanctions. The man is viewed as holding all the power in their relationship, and through this power he can control both his and his woman's life.

.... My husband came home... baby was six weeks old. Came home, sat on the chair, watched me and smiled, and said I was no longer ‘applicable.’ He used the word applicable. No longer applicable to him. He said that I'm no longer interested in you, I'm no longer interested in this marriage. I'm fed up of this family routine. He then shrugs his shoulders. I'm a big man now, and I have somebody else...A couple of weeks before he had just gotten a promotion from officer health and safety to manager of the Southern Caribbean, so his salary went from 10 to 30 thousand dollars in that space of a month... (*Shelly, 2015*).

Carol shared her experience of the psychological control and threats by her partner by means of mental games and food.

...He was closed off because he wanted me gone. ...He starved me and the kids. He did a lot of stuff to get me to leave. ...this went on for months, for years. He would give us a certain amount of food for the month. And then along the way, during the month, stuff would run out, and I would say ‘oh we need more flour, we need this, we need that.’ [He would respond] ‘Oh, do without it. I give you all this food, what you doing with it?’ Now, mind you, I am feeding him breakfast, lunch, and dinner, right. What I am feeding I am not feeding anyone else. And he worked in a law office, so he knew the law. He knew how to get rid of you. He knew what your triggers are. He knew if you leave, you would lose out. He knew stuff. And he would pressure me. He wanted a divorce. Because I guess the women outside, they’re wanted to come in. And in the meantime, I am getting phone calls saying, ‘your man was by me last night. You have the ring but I have the man.’ (*Carol, 2015*)

The patriarchal system creates dependence on men to the extent that women believe that they will be unable to manage or support themselves or children. This has placed women in a subordinate role which has been passed down generation after generation through colonization, slavery, and indentureship.

I have to say that all the women who participated in this research were brave and courageous women from across Trinidad and Tobago. They were compelled to share their stories in the hopes that this would make a difference in the lives of women enduring domestic violence. Their commitment to share their story brought forth significant themes. All ten women were exceptionally genuine and authentic. Their humility was extremely humbling, and it was a privilege for me to reconnect with a community that has had so much to offer in dealing with the daily threats of violence in their homes. These women represent many women in Trinidad and

Tobago who want equality in their homes and nation, not only for themselves, but for future generations.

Chapter 5: Discussion

In this chapter, I will discuss the relation of findings from my research to the literature. I will navigate to further explore colonization, domestic violence, and women in Trinidad and Tobago. The outcries and tensions which lie in the area of women's issues and domestic violence created the impetus for the Domestic Violence Act in Trinidad and Tobago. However, there have been problems with the execution of this legislation in the protection and safety of women and children. Finally, I engage in a discussion around the social justice and social change that is taking place to combat domestic violence in Trinidad and Tobago.

The history of colonization in Trinidad and Tobago has created a “culture of violence” (Brereton, 2010) by means of slavery and indentureship in the Caribbean (Danns & Parsad, 1989; Sokoloff, 2004, and Zellerer, 2000), which continues to exist today. The women in this research have spoken to the stormy history of Trinidad and Tobago and how the mentality of colonization has permeated domestic violence in Trinidad and Tobago. Danns and Parsad's (1989) research supports the notion that the legacy of colonization has left a mark not only on the women of Trinidad and Tobago, but also on the men and social structures of these two islands. (Brereton, 2010).

Slavery and Indentureship Socializes the “Culture of Violence” (Brereton, 2010)

The literature reviewed for this study defined domestic violence as a multicausal problem, which requires multiple points of interception to gain a complete understanding of the issue (Dupont & Sokoloff, 2005; Griffith et al., 2006, and Murdoch, 2009). Historically, the women identified colonization as a significant point of intersection, where violence between men and women was initially framed by the colonizers “quest for monopolistic control, ownership and possession of societies and people in the name of power, glory and pleasure” (Beckles, 20010, p. 5). The women acknowledged that the constant brutality and degradation of *self* by the hand of the colonizers changed the way racialized men and women viewed *each other* and over time internalized their oppression, causing them to see themselves as inferior and weaker than their oppressors. Authors such as Beckles (2010), Brereton (2010), Dupont and Sokoloff (2005), and Griffith et al., (2006) discussed the history of slavery and indentureship and the brutal impact colonization and violence had, not only on the physical bodies of those who were forced to these islands, but also the lasting effect it continues to have on their descendants (Brereton, 2010). The racism and this type of violent punishment carried on through into the homes of those slaves and indentured servants (Murdoch, 2009). The women in my research shared that the division between men and women started as far back as childhood, and boys and girls were socialized differently. Trotman (1986) cited in Brereton (2010) explains that the socialization

of boys and girls in the school system used corporal punishment (straps and whips) as a way to control the behaviours of “little savages” (p.11).

Undoubtedly, those children later became adults who internalized the racism and oppression that they experienced thus normalizing the positioning and violence towards women in social and ethnic groupings (Brereton, 2010). For generations, the literature confirms that violence against women went unchallenged and virtually uncriticized (Brereton, 2010). The stories from these women reflected the violence that was taught and what most learned from their social environment. Bandura’s (1977) social learning theory states that individuals learn from their environment through observation, imitation, and modeling. Therefore, violence has become the fabric which has constructed the identity of these Caribbean islands.

Moreover, it must be noted here that to peg colonization as the only cause of domestic violence would be misleading and an injustice to the multiple intersectionalities (poverty, ethnicity, class, status, gender...) that have been identified by the literature (Tanikella, 2003; Sokoloff, 2004; and Potter et al., 2010) and throughout these women’s stories. The Caribbean, including Trinidad and Tobago, survived a violent history that evolved out of a capitalist economic machine driven by greed by the bourgeoisie elites that took advantage of poor marginalized lesser white men that raped and plundered the colonies seeking wealth and honour (Fischer, 2004, p. 7-8). Throughout these voyages, lesser white men that were deemed slaves had become masters (Fischer, 2004), and imperial hierarchies and social goals developed through industrialization of nations forming

the patriarchal system around power and control to feed the interest of the ruling social elites (Beckles, 2010, 2-5). Over time, identities were formed along intersectionalities, internally socialized around “superior” and “inferior,” using race, ethnicity, class, social location, and gender to divide. For the sake of argument, privilege was bestowed on those that more closely resembled the behaviour and dominance of the ruling settlers (Allahar, 2010). Both men and women were exposed to violence at the hands of the colonizers’ salacious need for power and control. Violence has been used for centuries to gain the upper hand, not only in the home, but also in the patriarchal capitalist systems which carry over into every structure of society today (Alexander, 1994).

Patriarchy, Power, and Privilege

It is imperative to understand the historical role colonization played in women’s abuse, especially because Trinidad and Tobago’s environment was shaped under a dominant patriarchal colonial rule established by early settlers, which used violence and systemic dominance to exploit and control the slaves and indentured servants in the Caribbean (Trotman, 1986). In both the literature (Bartky, 1992; Besse, 2004; and Geller, 2009) and the findings, patriarchy is described through gender inequality and the subordination of women in Trinidad and Tobago. Power is also a contributing factor to violence and resides in subtle and overt social-cultural structures and discourse in Caribbean society. For example, women stated that they were still expected to carry on the domestic roles of nurturers, housewives, and caregivers of the family. Whereas, men were given a “pass”

(Reddock, 2003) when it came to taking responsibility for violent behaviour, caring for children, or undertaking day-to-day household duties (Alexander, 1994). Danns and Parsad (1989) explained that common-law and “visiting” relationships (men engage in having more than one relationship or family with child/ren) is very common in the Caribbean. In fact, a man having more than one family is accepted and normal among such ethnic groups. Anderson and Umberson (2001) call to the attention the division between males and females. *Lisa* (2015), a participant in this study shared that males carry on the surname of the family, therefore granting boys a level of privilege and status over girls. The power difference between men and women was a very important topic to the women in this study. They shared their views on how privilege and status has been bestowed on men by patriarchal structures that support the violence used to demonstrate a male’s manhood (Anderson & Umberson, 2001).

Many of the women recognized the complexities of male and female relationships emerging from the country’s history of enslavement and indentureship. This combination of power and privilege has created significant barriers for women seeking assistance and support against domestic violence, thus re-victimizing women and their children on a structural level. It seems as though the State is a critical element in contributing to the violence and subjugation of women in Trinidad and Tobago. Simply put, in order for violence against women to stop, the nation has to play a significant role in defining the rules and legislation of its citizens. The Domestic Violence Act 1991 was a radical move by the

government, implemented to protect the rights and lives of women enduring abuse by the hands of intimate partners or family members in the home. This move was important and the literature argues (Lazarus-Black, 2003) that it can be viewed as a decolonizing act that carried decolonizing/emancipatory leverage for the women of Trinidad and Tobago. It was amended in 1999 and 2005 to give more power to the authorities, i.e. police and courts as domestic violence was still being taken up as a private matter with limited consequences to the abuser. Many of the women argued that the act may have dissuaded some violent men, but it has left many poor racialized women on the island fighting for equal justice. While the legislation and policies such as the Domestic Violence Act have been put in place to protect women, it is not reinforced by the State or many NGOs. Some women in this study believed that the nation's inability to fully address the needs of women is to blame and represents the deeply rooted colonialism which sustains the violence and oppression both men and women experience. Even though much has been written about domestic violence, not much has changed regarding the attitudes, values, and beliefs carried over into our post-colonial society.

Colonial Ideologies Live on through Language, Attitudes, Values and Beliefs

The majority of the women in this study highlighted that within Trinidad and Tobago's cultural norms there is an unspoken acceptance around women enduring domestic violence (Hadeed & El-Bassel, 2006). The women talked about the attitudes and general inconsistencies around accessibility to sufficient resources based on the intersection of gender, ethnicity, class, status, etc. and who can afford

resources such as attorneys, counseling, and safe housing. Also, there is a lack of follow-through on domestic violence by authorities due to class systems and ethnic privileging, which makes it more difficult for some women to leave the abusive home (Lazarus-Black, 2001). Over the years, articles written by Alexander (1994), Bissessar (2000) and Lazarus-Black (2001) highlighted the limitations in Trinidad and Tobago's judiciary programs for mandatory counseling, the lack of accountability by the abuser for the abuse, the inability of the magistrates to manage the large number of domestic violence cases, and the lack of training on gender-based issues.

The women mentioned that authorities are still not addressing domestic violence cases appropriately. A *Trinidad and Tobago Express* newspaper report on December 4th, 2005 refers to the insensitivity and inadequacy on the part of police, and gives details of one victim's experience of police inaction despite several complaints, including an incident in which the victim was jailed for half a day following a confrontation with her husband (Martin, 2005, December 4th). There are a number of organizations calling into question the quality of services offered to women in violent domestic situations, In 2015, the *Trinidad Express* newspaper reported that Trinidad and Tobago Police Services (TTPS) were investigated by local and international organizations in the mishandling of domestic violence cases (Braxton, N. 2015, August 10th). The United Nation High Commissioner for Refugees (2008) website stated that Trinidad and Tobago's police enforcement is "lax" around the issues of domestic violence ([Canada: Immigration and Refugee](#)

[Board of Canada](#), 2008). There are also governmental bodies such as Ministry of Gender, Youth, and Child Development, NGOs, and the Trinidad and Tobago Coalition Against Domestic Violence who are mandated to reduce the rates of domestic violence on the islands. However, the women in my study shared their frustration with many of these organizations because they ignore requests for assistance, are not transparent, and have not been accountable or inclusive with services or the requests for research data (James-Sebro, 2001).

Light Skin/Dark Skin: Ethnicity and Class

Another identified topic of discussion was the construction of a “western–race” based society structured through ethnicity and class, and described as light skin vs. dark skin (Camejo, 1971). The women I spoke to reaffirmed the existence and idea of “colourism” (Potter et al., 2010; Smith, 2010; and Williams, 2011) within the Caribbean. The legacy of colonization has reinforced ideas of privilege (Brereton, 2010) and status through a hierarchy of gender, ethnicity, and class. This ideology has seeped through racialized groups further “pitting” (Beckles, 2010) men and women against each other, basing notions of beauty and status on the lightness or darkness of one’s skin colour. The women in this study agreed that these westernized ideals are a legacy of “internalized oppression” (Gonzalez et al., 2014 and Poupart, 2003) that is passed down and reinforced through various cultural media, such as magazines, books, fashion, and politics. An example that many of the women talked about in this research were the conflicts and tensions that exist in families and society when determining a partner to date or marry. This

is a very contentious issue and is usually discussed in private among close family members. In many cases, the partner must fit into the preferred ethnic grouping, which is typically one closest to their own ethnicity. If the choice is controversial, the partner may or may not be supported by the extended family if a domestic violent situation arises.

Consequently, the issue of ethnic and racial divisions exist in politics.

Women argue that if they are aware of a candidate who identifies with their issues and is in a position of power, they hope for access to services: government housing, high court decisions, child support, and help around domestic violence services and resources. This may not be the case in all incidences; *Joslyn* (2015) shared with me a time when she was still in a violent situation with a protection order and her matter pending in high court. She remembers feeling like she was fighting a losing battle because of her ethnicity, and out of pure desperation she sent a letter to the then Prime Minister, Kamla Parsad-Bissessar explaining her situation.

Unfortunately, she received no response or acknowledgement from the Prime Minister. *Shelly* (2015) spoke about her personal story and the lengths she took to get her case heard. She recounted showing up at a Head of State event with her domestic violence case file in hand, begging the Minister of Justice to help her.

The findings of this research have revealed the ethnic divisions which have insinuated themselves into the various political, economical, social, and cultural structures throughout history, and have altered the identities of both men and women in Trinidad and Tobago. The literature, such as Lazarus-Black (2003) and

Brereton (2010) agrees that this shift leaves certain women searching for identity and agency within an oppressive structural framework.

The Domestic Violence Act and the “Culture of Domestic Violence”

Unfortunately, domestic violence has become a basic part of the social fabric in family life (Alexander, 1994). *Samina* shared how violence had become “normal” in their family, to the point where both she and her partner were seen as the aggressors. The literature (Danns & Parsad, 1989) and the findings agreed that domestic violence is a multifaceted phenomenon and there are many definitions that attempt to capture what domestic violence is, however complexity is still prevalent.

Trinidad and Tobago’s Domestic Violence Act in 1991 gave way to a seemingly private sphere matter by challenging the attitudes and beliefs of the nation’s stormy history (Dupont & Sokoloff, 2005; Lazarus- Black, 2003, and Murdoch, 2009). Some progress has been made, but there is still no major transformation of new attitudes and values existing in post-colonial Trinidad and Tobago (Lazarus-Black, 2001). The women whom I interviewed shared with me that there is still a lack of understanding around the issues of women’s oppression (culture, language, attitude, values, and belief) (Danns & Parsad, 1989; Zellerer, 2000). This misunderstanding has made it extremely difficult to eradicate the oppression women experience, especially when violence and abuse is camouflaged in various forms in Trinidad and Tobago

The women in the study suggested that even after the Domestic Violence Act 1999, which gave more power to the state to protect women from violence, society continues to devalue the empowerment of women by legislation, policies, courts, shelters, services, attitudes, values, and beliefs. Lazarus-Black (2001) referenced Bartky (1988) and Foucault (1979) ideas that undoubtedly the criminalization of domestic violence has challenged people's minds about what is permissible in the "discipline" of women (p. 399). Among certain groups there was a tendency (Lazarus-Black, 2006) present to rationalize men's violence against women and regard it as acceptable under specific conditions (p. 142). Lazarus-Black (2006) article states that "disciplining" women was deemed "reasonable" for example, in cases of disrespect or unfaithfulness (p. 142). She continues on, to point out that the Act does not relieve anyone who suffers from familial abuse, as it only protects certain categories of women, far fewer than most citizens would imagine (Lazarus-Black, 2001, p.401). Unprotected, for example, is a poor woman who cannot afford to retain a lawyer to represent her case in a court of law. Other women encounter further victimization with a system not fully prepared to help or support them with adequate resources. Many of these women talked about feeling racialized and sexualized within their own country, as though they did not belong or should not be given the same rights and freedom as men.

Re-victimization of Women

Many women interviewed in this research shared that there were times they had to go to great lengths in order to receive help, protection, housing, custody of

children, and spousal support. *Carol, Shelly* and *Joslyn* explained that the only time women's issues were on the platform to be addressed was around election time, or when a woman is killed by her partner. Then domestic violence gets media attention and some changes are promised. The women in this research found politicians/stakeholders had many misconceived ideals in how to respond to complexity of this issue. One political candidate put herself forward for the upcoming election on a racialized platform and promised to fight for women's rights, but she was not re-elected amid "fear over crime and allegations of corruption" (Fraser, 2015). Many of these women felt powerless, frustrated, and marginalized within a system that was set in place to help them. In turn, whether directly or indirectly, they were silenced and the response to their issues or situation were not addressed or supported. Lazarus- Black (2001) research highlighted that the court system is still trying to catch up to the needs of women. Many women indicated that they had gone to the police as a last resort and had been unsuccessful in stopping the violence, even with a protection order in place. Almost all the women in this research study described feeling helpless and re-victimized by the system which was meant to assist women at their most vulnerable time. The findings from this study highlight the disconnection between the Domestic Violence Act put in place to protect women and the actuality of their experience to seek help.

Many women were persuaded or encouraged to "try and work things out" with their partner, leaving women feeling confused about what do under the current

system and viewing the system as broken. While for some women, it becomes extremely hard to leave the abuser, because they feel a sense of attachment and protection from their abuser (Hadeed, 2003). This is known as psychological process which exists with each abusive relationship and creates and interlocks a “trap” or a cycle of abuse, which nurtures and sustains the need for power and control within that relationship (Hadeed, 2003). Some women stated that instead of fighting a losing battle with the system, legislation, courts, community, and family, they continue to endure the violence by internalizing and accepting the abuse as just a part of the normality for men and women. The women proclaim that as victims they are blamed for the domestic violence and publically judged by the culture for reinforcing gender-stereotypes when victims return to their abusers. Women in these situations tend to develop a sense of “learned hopelessness,” a syndrome in which the victim believes that they have no control over their environment and are powerless to change their current circumstances (Rawls, 2009).

Unfortunately for some women in this research, they see suicide as a better way out of the abuse than turning to a system which will fail them. Many of the women interviewed stated that they viewed social attitudes as a deflection in bringing about social change in Trinidad and Tobago regarding domestic violence. It seems the standard is becoming one where men do not have to take responsibility, or be held accountable, for their violence against women. It is much easier to blame the victim than to acknowledge the continued contribution of men holding greater power over women due the historic privileging of class, gender, and

ethnicity. It is important to note that despite the horrific stories these women shared, they did not view themselves as weak or inadequate. The opposite was true; these women saw themselves as strong and resilient.

Social Justice and Advocacy for Social Change

The findings from this study revealed that the fight to end violence against women is an ongoing cause in Trinidad and Tobago. Lazarus-Black (2006) expresses that “magistrates may routinize cases so that over time they seem less pressing and are thus easier to dismiss or seek to keep families together without awarding protection orders - it’s a ‘public secret’ that goes unacknowledged” (p. 152) but women are not giving up on the possibility to end violence against women, which they believe is their human right (Morgaine, 2009). Sokoloff and Dupont (2005) stresses that there are three intersecting systems to address dominance and domestic violence at its root: class, race, and gender (p. 39). In my opinion, although the findings from this research would agree that the intersectionalities of domestic violence among Trinidad and Tobago women are complex we have to look to the colonial root which constructed this inequality among men and women, the privilege of class and the division of race (Ramsaran, 2001). The findings reveal that women must continue to get involved by means of social advocacy, education, research, changes to legislation and policies, and to demand that human rights for women are upheld. Although, the women’s movement of the 1950s and 1960s brought forth the humanness of women, more change needs to continue.

Through this discussion, the stories and experiences of those women I interviewed conversed with the literature of domestic violence, colonization, and feminism as it related to the islands of Trinidad and Tobago. What was most interesting was to uncover and explore the impact colonization has and continues to play as significant role in domestic violence (Danns & Parsad, 1989). The next section will explore some recommendations as an outcome from this research study.

Recommendations

Trinidad and Tobago possess a unique history highlighting the colonization of an emerging society which tolerates the aggressive behaviour perpetrated by men. In the same instance, the colonial social norms (Ramsaran, 2001, p. 111) forced women to view themselves as lesser than their male counterparts. In my opinion, there needs to be a complete shift in thinking about the role of gender, ethnicity, and privilege. In further thinking of the complex issues surrounding domestic violence among women in the Caribbean, I would like to share a few suggestions to begin in the decolonization process of domestic violence while keeping women at the centre of this inquiry.

Decolonizing Perspective

A recommendation in regards to decolonization is telling and sharing the truth of what has happened to the indigenous and ethnic groups of the Caribbean islands. By educating people about how the colonizers set the stage for division by patriarchy, privilege, and class through slavery and indentured servitude (Beckles, 2010; Brereton, 2010; and Taylor, 2005), this can be a catalyst for healing among racial and ethnic groups in Trinidad and Tobago. It would also be important to hold public forums so that we can begin a discussion around colonial ideologies that have been passed down generation after generation (Griffith et al., 2006).

Feminist Perspective

A feminist discourse emphasizes that the voices of women have to be at the centre of domestic violence discussions, especially racialized women, women of colour, and Caribbean women; all who have experienced marginalization based on ethnicity, race, and gender inequalities. These experiences should be included and taken up differently due to a patriarchal system that governed their experience through racism and discrimination based on skin tone- light skin/dark skin. By increasing access to education, women and especially girls would have the chance to upgrade their human capital (Ramsaran, 2001) within Trinidad and Tobago's society.

Raising Consciousness of Domestic Violence through Education

While conducting my research in Trinidad and Tobago, I was invited to facilitate a few workshops on the two islands focusing on issues of colonization, domestic violence, conflict resolution, trauma, relationship attachment, and re-victimization as it relates to state violence. These workshops were designed to begin the conversation regarding the topics and issues, as well to begin raising people's consciousness. I would like to see these workshops/information sessions continue. By creating awareness through education it dismantles the barriers not only for women, but also for men.

Inclusion of men and boys. By including men and boys in the raising of consciousness of colonization and domestic violence, both men and women will

begin to understand the impact that violence has had over the generations. It is important to recognize that men are a product of this history (Bandura, 1962; Beckles, 2010; and Brereton, 2010). Also, by including men the argument can be made that gender is fluid, and that binaries have been socially constructed not only in masculine and feminine, but in same sex and transgendered relationships (Reddock, 2003).

Decolonization (understanding the history). Domestic violence advocates and literature aims to “disrupt understanding of cultural matters that marginalize others” (Reyes-Cruz & Soon, 2010, p. 203) and begin to critically think on a much deeper level regarding colonial and violent mentality that has been engrained by our forefathers (Brereton, 2010).

Anti-violence work

The goal around anti-violence work is allowing women to manage behaviours by men that are deemed unethical, meaning that women would be able to provide direction for laws and legislation that affects them. Anti-violence work is an important way of educating and raising consciousness. This could be accomplished by education campaigns on violence and behaviours that may be overlooked because they have been engrained in the culture and dismissed. This anti-violence approach is about opening up space for women to share their concerns around what is deemed acceptable or unacceptable to them in order to shed light on behaviours that have become normalized with Trinidad and Tobago’s culture.

Feminist movement

Many feminists have not united to collaborate on the issues that divide women and men, such as poverty, housing, racism, and many larger systemic issues. For example, LGBTQ people have not always been included in the discussion of these issues and how violence and domestic violence can be addressed (Ristock, 2005, p. 65-69). Geller (2009), points out the idea of gender as still just another variable to be included is an un-reflexive positivist approach that forces individuals into “categories” that label them to conform to societal pressures to make the masses that dictate what’s “normal” happy (p. 67). It is my belief that feminists could unite under one common umbrella, which is to raise consciousness around the conceptualization that domestic violence is human violence. Domestic violence affects everyone across class, race, disability, sexuality, and gender. If the various ranges of feminism could decolonize their way of thinking and see our differences, we could band together to fight the root causes domestic violence on a national and international level.

Research from Caribbean Women’s Perspective

The feminist perspective highlights the need for social change by means of orientation and research collaboratively rather than in separate spheres (Dobash & Dobash, 1988; Hadeed & Lee, 2010). However, it is imperative that domestic violence research come from a Caribbean racialized perspective. Hadeed and Lee (2010) draw attention to the various difficulties that researchers are needing to address when investigating domestic violence, such as: work interference, barriers

to sustaining work, absenteeism, accessing educational programs, lack of economic independence, work performance, and job stability (p.286-289). Both education and employment are factors required to rise out of poverty and dependence, and when these factors are compromised many women are left dependent on men or the system, which can lead them to face further barriers in society

I adopted a critical feminist perspective to highlight the voices and stories of the women I interviewed through this research, to understand the complexity of domestic violence in the Caribbean and how women leaders are advocating for changes to support women on all levels who experience violence in their lives.

Conclusion

Initially, when I began this research all I considered at the time was how I was going to capture the voices and experiences of women who experience domestic violence in Trinidad and Tobago. As I delved deeper into this research, I realized that this process provided the closure I needed as a witness to domestic violence in my younger years at home and in my community. Listening to the women in this study recount the abuse they experienced at the hands of their intimate partners was not an easy task. By using a qualitative approach for this research, I captured a rich and in-depth understanding of the layers and intersectionalities (Dupont & Sokoloff, 2005) of domestic violence and how it impacts both men and women on various levels. Throughout this research my aim was to understand domestic violence and the role of Trinidad and Tobago's colonial history in shaping the social structures, values, and beliefs of these two islands. I have learned that power, privilege, and patriarchy have been the colonial framework which continues to maintain the social and political structures, while marginalizing racialized groups of people. I was able to facilitate educative seminars to bring awareness regarding various issues relating to domestic violence and women, thus leading to findings that highlight domestic violence as a visible yet invisible social phenomenon embedded within the constructs of Trinidad and Tobago society. Turning a blind eye to this human problem has allowed domestic violence to remain a "private matter" locked within the constraints of "husband-wife-business," which has caused women to internalize their abuse for years, even

though the nation's Domestic Violence Act had been implemented to eradicate violence against women and men. However, this “public secret” (Lazarus-Black, 2007) has found a way to create other issues, such as ethnic division, used as a barrier to resources and full citizenship, which creates further oppression between marginalized, racialized groups already disadvantaged around class, location, and human rights. The results presented draw attention to a society fragmented around its colonial past through its beliefs, attitudes, and values, focusing more on their individual differences rather on the colonial history that ripped them from their homelands. Instead of seeing that there is a shared sense of healing and belonging that needs to occur due to the painful history experienced by slaves and indentured servants at the hands of an industrialized capitalist ideology, they turn on each other.

Also, the findings show that many organizations have not responded effectively to women experiencing domestic violence. Issues around accessibility to effective resources, such as: shelter protocols, unenforceable protection orders, and legal procedures are still agonizingly slow for women in crisis (Lazarus- Black, 2007). Another finding discussed the legitimized normalcy of domestic violence in homes and communities. As well, it is seen as family business, keeping contained as private matters between husbands and wives. (Danns & Parsad, 1989). The previously mentioned findings represented an initial step to give voice to the women who participated in this research to draw attention to the much needed work that still needs to be done to decrease domestic violence in Trinidad and Tobago.

The findings allowed for further discussion around both the research questions and left room for continuation around the discussion of the role colonization played in the lives of racialized men and women that sustains domestic violence in Trinidad and Tobago.

Davis (2010), Lazarus-Black (2007), Hadeed (2006), Reddock (2006), and Zellerer (2000) all expressed the need for inclusion of men in addressing domestic violence. By raising awareness and a sense of consciousness, discussion must occur around colonization at the forefront in examining the race divisions (Allahar, 2010), gender' inequalities (Davis, 2010), power differences (Lazarus-Black, 2007), masculinities (Mohammed, 2004), private and public attitudes, and culture (Narayan, 2013). In conclusion, although, at times we lift our voices in unison and say we stand for equality as feminists, “the movement to end women's oppression” (hooks 2000, 26) tends to bring us down like “crabs in a bucket” (Sampath, 1997).

The men and women who experience domestic violence require holistic approaches (Dupont & Sokoloff, 2005, p. 58) which enable women and communities to develop tools to find their own solutions, wherever possible. We also have to remember that domestic violence is a human problem that was bred on colonized nations through “a culture of violence which was both impulsive and implosive: that is, it manifested itself as a violent actions of irrational men [and women] wreaking havoc on themselves rather than on the source of their frustration and oppression” (Brereton, 2010, p. 8). It will take all people from many different

walks of life to contribute in raising our consciousness regarding the legacy of colonization (Brereton, 2010) in order to put an end to violence against women.

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DATE: February 2, 2015

Appendix A

Letter of Information/ Consent

A Study of Caribbean Identity and Domestic Violence

Student Investigator:

Name **Karen Thornton**

Department of Social Work
McMaster University
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada
(868) 312 4720
E-mail: thorntkm@mcmaster.ca

Thesis Supervisor:

Dr. Mirna Carranza

Department of Social Work
McMaster University
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada
(905) 525-9140 ext. 23789
E-mail: carranz@mcmaster.ca

Purpose of the Study:

The purpose of my thesis research is to explore the experiences of women enduring domestic violence when accessing services in Trinidad and Tobago.

The study's overall goal is to learn about the gaps regarding accessibility and service delivery. Also, to discover if policies and service delivery create barriers for you when accessing services for domestic violence concerns in Trinidad and Tobago.

Procedures Involved in the Research:

You are invited to take part in this study on Caribbean identity and domestic violence. The study involves one-on-one interviews that should take no more than 90 minutes.

These are examples of the kinds of questions you will be asked: (1) What kinds of abusive behaviours have you suffered? (2) Do you have conversations with

friends and family members about domestic violence? (3) Do you read about domestic violence in the local newspaper? (4) What would you like to see changed around accessibility of services for women enduring domestic violence in Trinidad and Tobago?

I appreciate your participation in the study as you are experts in your own lives, and you are providing me with important information to narrow down where the gaps are around accessibility of services and domestic violence in Trinidad and Tobago.

Potential Harms, Risks or Discomforts:

The risks involved in participating in this study are minimal. There are no physical risks to you being involved in my research. There are some social and psychological risks for participating in this research.

Social risks will be minimized by the researcher as I will leave signed consent forms from you in the collaborator's office (in a locked cabinet). You will not take them home.

Psychological Risk – You may feel uncomfortable with (anxious, uneasy about) some of the questions being asked. You might even experience emotional triggers based on your personal lived experience. You may find it stressful to respond to all or some of the questions. You may worry about how others will react to what you say if you participate in the study.

Counseling services will be made available to you if you feel you would like to talk more after the interview.

I have collaborated with counseling services in Trinidad and Tobago and a list of service agencies will be provided to you today for you to access if you want to follow up.

You do not need to answer questions that you do not want to answer or that make you feel uncomfortable. I describe below the steps I am taking to protect your privacy.

Potential Benefits to You:

This research will have no immediate direct benefit to you. However, there are a few indirect benefits, such as:

- a. Connecting you with a community of organizations, advocates, and researchers who are working diligently to help end violence in the lives of women locally and internationally;
- b. Knowing that there is research being done in the field to try and end domestic violence in the lives of women;
- c. Being able to see a sense of community and a feeling of inclusion and support and not feel like you are traveling this journey alone; and

d. Knowing that research is being conducted in the area of domestic violence to inform policy in Trinidad and Tobago.

Payment or Reimbursement:

You will receive a CASH Voucher of \$54TT, which you may choose to keep, even if you decide to leave the interview.

Confidentiality:

You are participating in this study confidentially. I will not use your name or any information that would allow you to be identified.

Aliases will be assigned with numerical identification to protect your privacy. No one will be able to identify your true identity. No one will know whether you were in the study unless you choose to tell them.

Every effort will be made to protect your confidentiality and privacy. However, we are often identifiable through the stories we tell, so please keep this in mind when talking with me.

The information/data you provide will be transcribed back in Canada when the research has concluded one and a half months later. Records will be kept for seven years in a locked cabinet where only I will have access to it in a secure location in Canada. The reason for this is, I am interested in pursuing my PhD studies in the next year or two and would like to expand on the data captured at my master's level. The data will be destroyed after the seven-year mark by the researcher even if I am unable to get into a PhD program. Data from this research may also contribute to journal articles to be published by the researcher.

b) Legally Required Disclosure:

Although I will protect your privacy as outlined above, if the law requires it, I will have to reveal certain personal information (e.g., child abuse), if harm is to come to a child, suicide, or acts of harm to another where that individual's life is threatened or in danger, which is in alignment with my Canadian Code of Ethics.

Participation and Withdrawal:

Your participation in this study is voluntary throughout the entire process, from beginning to end. It is your choice to be part of the study or not, you can withdraw at anytime up until June 1, 2015. If you decide to be part of the study, you can stop (withdraw), from the interview for whatever reason, even after signing the consent form or part-way through the study or up until *June 1, 2015*. If you decide to withdraw, there will be no consequences to you. In cases of withdrawal, any data you have provided will be destroyed unless you indicate otherwise. If you do not want to answer some of the questions you do not have to, but you can still be in the study. Your decision whether or not to be part of the study will not affect your interest in sitting down with one of the counseling organizations mentioned. You can choose to disclose your identity at that time but you do not need to do so at all.

Information about the Study Results:

I expect to have this study completed by approximately *July 1, 2015*. If you would like a brief summary of the results, please let me know how you would like it sent to you. Also, the findings from this research will be accessible to service users and service providers through journal articles, publication in local newspapers, and presentations at community events next year at the University of West Indies, St Augustine campus, Trinidad.

Questions about the Study:

If you have questions or need more information about the study itself, please contact me at:

thorntkm@mcmaster.ca

905 525 9140

Department of Social Work

McMaster University

Hamilton, Ontario

This study has been reviewed by the McMaster University Research Ethics Board and received ethics clearance. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a participant or about the way the study is conducted, please contact:

Dr. Mirna Carranza

Department of Social Work

McMaster University

Hamilton, Ontario, Canada

(905) 525-9140 ext. 23789

E-mail: carranz@mcmaster.ca

Or

McMaster Research Ethics Secretariat

Telephone: (905) 525-9140 ext. 23142

C/o Research Office for Administrative Development

and Support

E-mail: ethicsoffice@mcmaster.ca

CONSENT

- I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Karen Thornton, of McMaster University.
- I have had the opportunity to ask questions about my involvement in this study and to receive additional details I requested.

- I understand that if I agree for myself to participate in this study, I may withdraw from the study at any time or up until approximately June 1, **2015**.
- I have been given a copy of this form.
- I agree for myself to participate in the study.

1. I (participant) agree that if I am invited to participate in the one-on-one interviews between April 20, 2015 to May 2, 2015, I (participant) can be audio-recorded, using a voice recorder. I (participant) understand that this will be used to further clarify the discussion, understand voice fluctuation, and my story.

YES NO

2. The researcher will not be able to remember orally everything that I (participant) have said. The researcher wants to make sure that she does not influence the data by adding what the researcher thinks I (participant) was trying to say. The goal is to keep my story authentic and genuine. I (participant) understand this tape recording will never be viewed by anyone other than the Student Investigator, Karen Thornton and will be destroyed as outlined in the confidentiality section of this letter of consent.

YES NO

3. I (participant) agree that the interviews can be audio recorded. I (participant) understand this recording will be used to analyze my responses to the discussion questions and to understand my explanation around Caribbean identity and Domestic violence. I (participant) understand that this recording will be transcribed and quotes from it will be used to illustrate themes from the discussion. I (participant) understand that my real name will not be used in the transcription or in the replication of my quotations in the final thesis paper.

YES NO

4. I (participants) agree that the quotes used for the final thesis report, as well as any subsequent presentations or articles which may be given / published from this study.

YES NO

Yes, I (participant) would like to receive a summary of the study's results.

Please send them to me at this email address

Or to this mailing address:

No, I (participant) do not want to receive a summary of the study's results.

Signature: _____ Date:

Name of Participant (Printed) _____

Appendix B

Karen Thornton Caribbean Identity and Domestic Violence Counselling Services Information Sheet

- *Here is a list of services where you can find someone to talk to, if you have something on your mind.*
- *If, at this time, you aren't ready to use one of these services, you might want to talk to a trusted family member or friend that you would normally go to when you have something on your mind.*

1. Trinidad and Tobago Coalition against Domestic Violence (TTCADV) – 868 627 6844; 868 624 0402; 1 Robinsonville Road, Belmont; cadv@ttcadv.net – provides free counseling and support services to perpetrators and domestic violence victims
2. Rape Crisis Centre – 868 622 7273(hotline); 868 657 5355, located at 40 Woodford St., Newtown, POS & 12 San Fernando Street, San Fernando. Provides general counseling and counseling for victims of rape.
3. National Family Services – 868 627 1163; The Trinidad offices of the National Family Services Division are open from 8:00 am to 4:00 pm, Monday to Friday, except public holidays. The opening hours for the Tobago office are 8:00 am to 4:15 pm, Monday to Thursday and 8:00 am to 4:00 pm on Friday, except public holidays. See website for core business: <http://mgycd.gov.tt/Our-Core-Business/National-Family-Services>
Counselling services provided under the aegis of the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development, Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

Family Services Division Offices:

- a. St. Patrick
Rotel Building
Neverson Street
Point Fortin
Trinidad
Tel. (868) 648-6747
- b. St. Andrew/St. David
Savi Street
Sangre Grande
Trinidad
Tel. (868) 691-3503
- c. St. Georges West
ABMA Building
55 - 57 St. Vincent
Street
Port of Spain
Trinidad
Tel. (868) 624-8218
- d. St. Georges East
Social Welfare
Building
Eastern Main Road
Tunapuna
Trinidad
Tel. (868) 662-5483
- e. Victoria
Social Welfare
Building
Independence
Avenue
San Fernando
Trinidad
Tel. (868) 653-0991
- f. Nariva/Mayaro
Social Welfare
Building
Rio Claro
Trinidad
Tel. (868) 644-0813
- g. Caroni
Couva Social
Services Centre
Camdeen Road
Couva
Trinidad
Tel. (868) 636-3206
- h. Social Welfare
Building
Delta Trading
Building
Eleanore Street
Chaguanas
Trinidad
Tel. (868) 671-3526
- i. Tobago
Children and Family
Services Unit
Department of
Social Services
Tobago House of
Assembly
TLH Complex
Montessori Drive,
Glen Road
Scarborough
Tobago, West
Indies
Tel. (868) 639-2673
/ 1512, 631-1439

http://www.ttconnect.gov.tt/gortt/portal/ttconnect/CitizenDetail/?WCM_GLOBAL_CONTEXT=/gortt/wcm/connect/gortt+web+content/TTConnect/Citizen/Topic/InformationandStatistics/Contacts+and+Directories/Family+Services+Division+Offices#quickLinks

<http://tinyurl.com/kwlv1qv>

4. National Domestic Violence Hotline – 800-SAVE (7283) – a 24 hour confidential hotline staffed by trained counsellors who provide immediate crisis intervention assistance to callers in need. Callers may be connected directly to get help in their areas, including emergency services and a shelter, as well as receive information and referrals, counselling and assistance in reporting abuse. (see brochure on TTCADV’s Facebook page)
5. Families in Action – 24-hour helpline: 868 628 2333; website: <http://www.familiesinaction.net/>

The helpline offers 24 hours, 7 days a week, emergency/crisis intervention. Anyone who feels emotionally or otherwise distressed is welcome to call and speak with one of our helpliners who will listen to you; help you work it out; direct you to people and places where help can be obtained. Who’s on the other side?

When you call the helpline, one of our caring, concerned para-professionals will answer you. All our help liners are carefully chosen and trained in listening skills, basic counselling, referral procedures and most importantly confidentiality. They are also kept up to date on crucial issues such as domestic violence, stress, grief and bereavement and substance abuse through on-going training. <http://www.familiesinaction.net/services/fias-services/>

They also provide in-person counselling to help with a wide range of personal issues. They have professionals who provide counselling services Mondays-Fridays from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. To see a counsellor you can call to make an appointment, or just drop in during the above mentioned hours and you will be seen by the first available counsellor. (text taken from their website)
6. Childline – 800 4321 or 131; email: childlinett@gmail.com and childline@childlinett.org website: www.childlinett.org - In addition to our 24 hour helpline, ChildLine also provides outreach services to primary and secondary schools, youth groups, PTAs and other institutions such as St. Jude’s Home for Girls and YTC. One goal of these outreach services, which are offered free of charge, is to sensitize the public, especially our target group of children and young people, to the availability of the helpline. In this way, students are aware that a safe place to get help exists just for them! Our Helpline Service is available 24 hours a day, every day of the year, including weekends and public holidays. If you need someone to talk to, we’re here to listen. (text taken from their website)
7. Older Persons Information Centre hotline: 800 OPIC (6742) – operational between 8am-4pm Monday to Friday, free counselling and support services (listed in poster on TTCADV’s Facebook page)

Appendix C

Interview Questions

CARIBBEAN IDENTITY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE **Karen Maria Thornton, (Master of Social Work student)**

(Department of Social Work – McMaster University)

Information about these interview questions: This gives you an idea what I would like to learn about domestic violence and accessibility to service in Trinidad and Tobago. Interviews will be one-to-one and will be open-ended (not just “yes or no” answers). Because of this, the exact wording may change a little. Sometimes I will use other short questions to make sure I understand what you told me or if I need more information when we are talking such as: “*So, you are saying that ...?*”, to get more information (“*Please tell me more?*”), or to learn what you think or feel about something (“*Why do you think that is...?*”).

1) Information about you: Your age now? Are you legally married? Do you have children and how old are they?

2) Please tell me what area of Trinidad and Tobago you are from? How do you identify yourself in Trinidad and Tobago context? Why? And, please tell me more about that identification?

3) In your opinion do you think domestic violence is a concern in Trinidad and Tobago?

Why do you think that?

- a. **Do you have conversations with friends and family about domestic violence?**
- b. **Do you read about domestic violence in the local newspapers?**
- c. **What do you think about domestic violence?**

4) Can you recall when domestic violence started in your life? Who? Please tell me what kind of violence?

5) How has domestic violence affected your life? Please tell me more about how your life has been affected by domestic violence?

6) Did you try to access support for domestic violence? What kind of support?

7) Did do you know you had rights as a woman facing domestic violence? What are those rights? Please tell me how you view these rights as they relate to domestic violence?

8) What kind of supports would you like to see implemented for women in domestic violence situations? Please tell me more about why you think that?

9) In your opinion, what do you think needs to change in order to address domestic violence in Trinidad and Tobago? Why do you say that?

10) Do you think services are accessible to women that experience domestic violence?

Yes No [formatting has gone wonky here...]

11) Why do you think accessibility to services meet the needs of women in violent situations? Why do you think that is the case?

12) Why do you think accessibility to services does not meet the needs of women in violent situations? Why do you think that is the case?

13) Is there something important we forgot? Is there anything else you think I need to know about domestic violence and accessibility in Trinidad and Tobago?

END

Appendix D

Caribbean Identity and Domestic Violence: What are the experiences that women enduring domestic violence encounter when accessing services in Trinidad and Tobago?

Researcher: Karen Maria Thornton

Oral Consent Script

Introduction:

Hello. I'm *Karen Thornton*...

Thank you for responding to my recruitment poster to participate in my research on Caribbean Identity and Domestic Violence.

Study procedures:

I'm inviting you to do a one-on-one interview *face-to-face* that will take about 60-90 minutes. I will ask you questions about domestic violence and service accessibility such as 1) What kinds of abusive behaviors have you suffered? 2. Do you read about domestic violence in the newspaper?

[*"I will take handwritten notes to record your answers as well as use an audio recorder to make sure I don't miss what you say".*] I can set up a time and place that works best for you so you feel comfortable and safe.

Risks:

There is no physical risk for taking part in this research.

You should be aware that there are risks when taking part in this study such as

Social Risk – You could face domestic difficulties if abusers knew of your participation. However every effort will be taken to minimize this risk throughout all aspects of the research. I will leave signed consent forms from you in my briefcase and on my password protected computer. I will make every effort to make sure that you are interviewed alone so you are not recognized as being a part of this study.

Psychological risk - Women who have experienced violence at the hands of a loved one may experience triggers of the incident. You might experience a feeling of remorse, sadness, shame, and a sense of grief. Many of these feelings

could be viewed as a natural way of coping with the events and retelling of the reason why you decided to access service in Trinidad and Tobago.

However, if these psychological discomforts are deemed too overwhelming for you, you will be asked if you would like to stop and be referred to one of the agencies sourced before conducting these interviews for counseling support. I have collaborated with these organizations for the duration of my research to offer this service to you, if you want it.

You do not need to answer questions that you do not want to answer or that make you feel uncomfortable responding to. And you can withdraw (stop taking part) at any time. I describe below the steps I am taking to protect your privacy.

Benefits:

There will be direct benefit to you if you agree to participate in my study on Caribbean identity and domestic violence.

- A safe place for you to tell your story with a researcher interested in hearing your viewpoint around domestic violence in Trinidad and Tobago.
- A feeling of belonging and inclusion that you are not facing this issue alone.
- A platform for your voice to be heard which is important around eliminating domestic violence not just locally but internationally.
- The benefits to you will also be the possible findings of this study that will be available to both the community and the women that they support around accessing services. These findings will also assist researchers and community supporters through reports and presentations to add to what women require when trying to access services for domestic violence issues.
- The study will provide possible timelines and policies that require attention in order for women facing violent situation an opportunity as to where supports are and their rights to access services.
- The study will directly impact social work practice in their understanding of the experience women enduring domestic violence encounter when accessing services in Trinidad and Tobago. To provide services that responds to victims of domestic violence needs, as it relates to experience and ability to cope and remaining safe.

I will keep the information you tell me during the interview confidential. Information I put in my report that could identify you will not be published or shared beyond the research team unless we have your permission. Any data from this research which will be shared or published will be the combined data of all participants. That means it will be reported for the whole group not for individual persons.

Voluntary participation:

- Your participation in this study is voluntary.
- You can decide to stop at any time, even part-way through the interview for whatever reason, or up until approximately *June 1, 2015*.
- If you decide to stop participating, there will be no consequences to you.
- If you decide to stop, we will ask you how you would like us to handle the data collected up to that point.
- This could include returning it to you, destroying it or using the data collected up to that point.
- If you do not want to answer some of the questions you do not have to, but you can still be in the study.
- If you have any questions about this study or would like more information you can call or email Karen Thornton at **(905) 525-9140 ext. 00000** or Karen@kmtlearning.com.

This study has been reviewed and cleared by the McMaster Research Ethics Board. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a participant or about the way the study is conducted, you may contact:

McMaster Research Ethics Board Secretariat
Telephone: (905) 525-9140 ext. 23142
c/o Research Office for Administration, Development &
Support (ROADS) E-mail: ethicsoffice@mcmaster.ca

I would be pleased to send you a short summary of the study results when I finish going over our results. Please let me know if you would like a summary and what would be the best way to get this to you.

Consent questions:

- Do you have any questions or would like any additional details? [*Answer questions.*]
- Do you agree to participate in this study knowing that you can withdraw at any point with no consequences to you?
[*If yes, begin the interview.*]
[*If no, thank the participant for her time.*] [as the study was limited to women, I don't think you need the word "his" here]



Appendix E

Recruitment Poster

PARTICIPANTS NEEDED FOR

RESEARCH IN Caribbean Identity and Domestic Violence

We are looking for volunteers to take part in a study of the experiences that women enduring domestic violence encounter when accessing services in Trinidad and Tobago.

Your participation would involve a one-on-one confidential interview with the researcher which will take approximately one hour.

In appreciation of your time you will receive a cash voucher of \$54TT.

Participants must be female between the ages of 18 and 60 and have encountered some form of domestic violence.

Confidentiality: Anonymous

For more information about this study, or to participate in this study,
please contact:

Karen Thornton
Social Work Department
1 868 312 4720
Email: *kmtconsultingassociates@gmail.com*

**This study has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance (Project # 2015
055)
by the McMaster Research Ethics Board.**

Call Karen Thornton
1 868 312 4720

Or

Email:

thorntkm@mcmaster.ca

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1 868 312 4720

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1 868 312 4720

Or

Email:

thorntkm@mcmaster.ca

Appendix F

**Caribbean Identity and Domestic Violence
Karen Thornton**


**RESEARCHER'S LOG FOR
RECORDING VERBAL CONSENT**

Participant's Unique ID number (i.e. 08-A01)	Participant's name	Date:

Appendix G

MREB Clearance Certificate

https://ethics.mcmaster.ca/mreb/print_approval_brian.cfm?ID=3540

 <p style="font-size: small;">Inspiring Innovation and Discovery</p>	<p>McMaster University Research Ethics Board (MREB) c/o Research Office for Administrative Development and Support, MREB Secretariat, GH-305, e-mail: ethicsoffice@mcmaster.ca</p> <p style="text-align: center;">CERTIFICATE OF ETHICS CLEARANCE TO INVOLVE HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH</p>		
<p>Application Status: New <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Addendum <input type="checkbox"/> Project Number: 2015 055</p>			
<p>TITLE OF RESEARCH PROJECT:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Caribbean Identity and Domestic Violence</p>			
Faculty Investigator(s)/ Supervisor(s)	Dept./Address	Phone	E-Mail
M. Carranza	Social Work	23789	mirnacarranza@rogers.com
Student Investigator(s)	Dept./Address	Phone	E-Mail
K. Thornton	Social Work	647-234-53	karen@kmtlearning.com
<p>The application in support of the above research project has been reviewed by the MREB to ensure compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement and the McMaster University Policies and Guidelines for Research Involving Human Participants. The following ethics certification is provided by the MREB:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> The application protocol is cleared as presented without questions or requests for modification.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The application protocol is cleared as revised without questions or requests for modification.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> The application protocol is cleared subject to clarification and/or modification as appended or identified below.</p>			
<p>COMMENTS AND CONDITIONS: Ongoing clearance is contingent on completing the annual completed/status report. A "Change Request" or amendment must be made and cleared before any alterations are made to the research.</p>			
Reporting Frequency:		Annual:	Other:
Date:		Chair, Dr. B. Detlor 