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## Review

# Child marriage in Bangladesh: Socio-legal analysis

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Child marriage is a strong social custom, particularly for girls in Bangladesh. There are many reasons for child marriage. But most vital reasons among them are poverty, superstition, lack of social security and lack of awareness. According to UNICEF report, 'the State of the World's Children, 2009', "Early marriage is pervasive in Bangladesh, with 64 percent of girls married before age 18. Early pregnancy often results from child marriage; one-third of girls aged 15 to 19 in Bangladesh are currently either mothers or pregnant." Although child marriage is prohibited legally, but occurrences of child marriage are still happening in rural areas of Bangladesh. According to *the Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929* the minimum legal age for marriage is 18 years for females in Bangladesh. Along with this Act child marriage is punishable by law. The right to free and full consent to a marriage is recognized in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and in many subsequent human rights instruments – consent that cannot be 'free and full' when at least one partner is very immature. Bangladesh also acceded to the *UN Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages* on 5 October, 1998. These laws, however, have little impact on the frequency of child marriage in Bangladesh. Laws should be enforced to discourage child marriage; however, legal actors alone are insufficient. Social awareness programmes may also be effective in deterring child marriage. To prevent child marriage, a wide range of individuals and organizations need to create awareness among people, particularly the poor. Especially, parents and government can play main role in reducing child marriage. An environment should be ensured where children get proper care and facility to grow up completely and properly. This paper attempts to present the socio-economic and physical consequences of girl child marriage and its legal protection with awareness level of parents in rural Bangladesh.

**Key words:** Child marriage, consequence, law, awareness.

## INTRODUCTION

Children are the weakest and most unprotected segment of the society. They are dependent upon parents and others for growing up. They need the support of the family, community and the state as a whole. In Bangladesh, a large number of children are deprived of their basic human rights due to unacceptable health, nutrition and education as well as social conditions. In addition, child marriage represents a major threat to children well being in Bangladesh. At present, early marriage is one of the important demographic determinates of girl child in

Bangladesh (Badrud, 1990). Parents encourage marriage of their daughters while they are still children in hope that this marriage will benefit them both financially and socially. Young girls are often regarded as an economic burden to their families; marrying them off at a very early age is seen as reducing the financial burden of the family. Parents encourage early marriage with a fear that their dowry price will increase as their daughters age. Apart from these, poverty is one of the most frequently cited factors behind child marriage in rural Bangladesh.

Statistics provided by Bangladesh Demographic Health Survey (BDHS-2005) show Bangladesh tops the world when it comes to early marriage. Early marriage is one of the reasons for increased populations in Bangladesh. There are many reasons for early marriage, but most vital reasons among them are: poverty, superstition and lack of awareness.

While the practice affects both girls and boys, the most fundamental rights of a child bride to survive and to develop are undermined. In most rural families, girls are never consulted on their marriage. The parents and the senior family choose the groom, fix the date and manage the wedding ceremony. They encourage early marriage out of fear that the dowry price will increase as their daughters age ([www.irinnews.org/report/asp](http://www.irinnews.org/report/asp)). Most of the time, the law on legal minimum age for marriage is ignored; the inadequacy of birth registration systems reinforces early marriage in Bangladesh. Apart from these, thousands of marriages go unregistered in our country. As a result, a large number of girls are deprived of their rights. One major consequence of early marriage is health problems associated with early pregnancy.

However, early marriage for boys and girls has serious physical, intellectual, psychological and emotional impacts. It also cuts off educational opportunity and hampers personal growth (Afroza, 1999). Though as per the *Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929* the legal marriage age in Bangladesh is 21 for boys, 18 for girls; but findings from the Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey (BDHS) indicate that the median age for marriage of girls is 16.4 years. The *Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929* provides punishment to men who marry children, those who solemnize child marriage, and parents or guardians who permit child marriage. But underage marriages are, however, still considered by the rural people in the country (Mizanur, 1999). The causes and implications of child marriage are complex and interconnected; thus there is no simple solution for eradicating child marriage. But this will require a social awareness along with supportive legislation in society, which is better for the country in all respects. Unless measures are taken to address early marriage, it will continue to be a major stumbling block to the achievement of child rights.

## **CORE REASONS OF CHILD MARRIAGE IN BANGLADESH**

Child marriage can arise due to a number of reasons in rural Bangladesh. Such as,

### ***Poverty***

Poverty is one of the most frequently cited factors behind child marriage in Bangladesh. Where poverty is acute, a young girl may be regarded as an economic burden. In

Bangladesh, poverty-stricken parents are persuaded to part with daughters through promises of marriage, or by false marriages, which are used to lure the girls into prostitution abroad.

### ***Economic and social status***

Girls are often regarded as an economic burden to their families. So the parents want to get marry their girl child at a very early age. Parents may genuinely feel that their daughter will be better off and safer with a regular male guardian. Some communities regard their girl children as a burden and think of getting rid of them by marrying them off early in a male-controlled society. Besides these, sometimes there are pressures from older members of the family and community.

### ***Lack of education***

In Bangladesh, most of the girls are drop-out from school, especially, in cultural settings where girls are raised for a lifetime confined to household occupations and are expected to marry very young.

### ***Social barrier***

Most of the family think marriage is a way to ensure that their daughters are 'protected', as parents feel their daughters will be better off financially and safer from sexual abuse or illicit sexual contact if they are married.

## **THE CONSEQUENCES OF CHILD MARRIAGE**

Child marriages violate the rights of the child in many ways. The major consequences of child marriage are the denial of childhood, the restriction of personal freedom and the lack of educational opportunity to develop a full sense of human being. Child marriage is harmful to the families and society as a whole. There are both physical and social consequences of child marriages.

### ***Loss of personal development***

Early marriage of girls and boys impairs the realization and enjoyment of virtually all of their rights. Most girls who are unhappy in an imposed marriage are very isolated. They lose their freedom as well as personal development. They are subjected to the atrocities of domestic violence and abandonment.

### ***Denial of education***

Child marriage is repeatedly cited as a significant factor

impeding the realization of the right to education. With early marriage, many girls drop out of school. They take away their right to education which undermines their self-confidence, decision-making power and denies them the opportunity to become economically independent. Girls who marry as adolescents attain lower schooling levels; have lower social status in their husband's families and suffer various problems. These consequences are reinforced by the fact that the children of young and illiterate mothers tend to face the same cycle of childhood deprivation and damage experienced by their mothers.

### **Health problems**

With early marriage comes early pregnancy. Child marriage and early childbirth are linked to high rates of pregnancy-related complications or risk to the life of the newborn. After marriage, girl children undergo severe health problems like pregnancy and childbirth. The risks of early pregnancy and childbirth are well documented: increased risk of dying, increased risk of premature labour, complications during delivery, low birth-weight, and a higher chance that the newborn will not survive. Pregnancy-related deaths are the leading cause of mortality for 15-19 year-old girls.

### **Expand population**

Child marriage extends a woman's reproductive span, thereby contributing to larger family sizes, especially in the absence of contraception.

## **LEGAL PROTECTION OF CHILD MARRIAGE**

### **National Legislation**

#### **The child marriage restraint Act, 1929**

In Bangladesh, the *Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1929* is the main law for controlling early marriage. According to the Act the minimum legal age for marriage is 18 years for females. Along with this Act early marriage is punishable by law. Section 3 states the punishment for male adult below twenty-one years of age marrying a child. This section states that

"Whoever, being a male above eighteen years of age and below twenty-one, contracts a child marriage shall be punishable with simple imprisonment which may extend to fifteen days, or with fine which may extend to one thousand rupees, or with both."

Moreover, section 5 of the said Act stipulates the punishment for solemnizing a child marriage. According to this section, "Whoever performs, conducts or directs any child marriage shall be punishable with simple imprisonment

which may extend to three months and shall also be liable to fine, unless he proves that he has reason to believe that the marriage is not a child marriage."

Section 6 mentions the following punishment for parent or guardian connected with child marriage:

"(1) Where a minor contracts a child marriage, any person in charge of the minor, whether as parent or guardian or in any other capacity, lawful or unlawful, who does any act to promote the marriage or permit it to be solemnized, or negligently fails to prevent it from being solemnized, shall be punishable with simple imprisonment which may extend to three months and shall also be liable to fine. It provides that no woman shall be punishable with imprisonment.

(2) For the purpose of this section, it shall be presumed, unless and until the contrary is proved, that where a minor has contracted a child marriage, the person in charge of such minor has negligently failed to prevent the marriage from being solemnized."

Although early marriage is prohibited legally, occurrences of early marriage are still happening in rural areas of the country. There are laws against it in the country but they are not executed properly. The *Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929* stemmed from a campaign that helped reposition women, family life, and childbearing within modern India. While the Act did not declare child marriages invalid, it helped pave the way for change.

## **THE BIRTH AND DEATH REGISTRATION ACT, 2004**

The situation of early marriage is increased by the fact that most births go unregistered. The Law and Local Government Ministry is putting the representation of the *Birth and Death Registration Act, 2004* in force since 2006. The Act requires birth certificate as proof of age for a number of essential services such as marriage registration, obtaining a passport, and enrollment in school. But in Bangladesh, birth registration is itself a typical problem. In spite of the law against child marriage, early marriage of girls, especially in rural, is widely prevalent. Enforcement of the relevant law is constrained mainly due to fact that the birth registration system is not implemented fully for which actual age of girls cannot be ascertained definitively.

### **The children Act, 1974**

Article 34 of the *Children Act, 1974* specifically stipulates the penalty to be imposed for cruelty to children. According to section 34 of the said Act,

"If any person over the age of sixteen years, who has the custody, charge or care of any child assaults, ill-treats,



neglects, abandons or exposes such child or causes such child to be assaulted, ill-treated, neglected, abandoned or exposed in a manner likely to cause such child unnecessary suffering or injury to his health, including loss of sight or hearing or injury to limb or organ of the body and any mental derangement, such person shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to two years, or with fine which may extend to Taka one thousand or with both.”

Appropriately, early marriage is taking place at random showing slight respect to the law. Human-right protesters and social workers say that according to the law early marriage is a punishable offence, but it is not banned. Besides, people do not follow the law because there is hardly any campaign to make the people aware about it, let alone solving the social problems.

### **Regional Instruments**

#### **The SAARC convention on preventing and combating trafficking in women and children for prostitution**

Article 1(5) of the *Convention* states that “Persons subjected to trafficking” means women and children victimized or forced into prostitution by the traffickers by deception, threat, coercion, kidnapping, sale, fraudulent marriage, child marriage, or any other unlawful means;...”

#### **The SAARC Convention on Regional Arrangements for the Promotion of Child Welfare in South Asia**

Article 4 of the *Convention* states that “States Parties shall make civil registration of births, marriages and deaths, in an official registry, compulsory in order to facilitate the effective enforcement of national laws, including the minimum age for employment and marriage.”

### **International instruments**

The right to free and full consent to marriage was recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 and many subsequent human rights instruments. A number of human rights instruments lay down norms to be applied to marriage, covering issues of age, consent, equality within marriage, and the personal and property rights of women. The key instruments and articles are as follows:

#### **THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS, 1948**

Article 16 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*

(*UDHR*) 1948 states:

“(1) Men and women of full age ... have the right to marry and found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution.

(2) Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending parties.”

Similar provisions are included in the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

#### **The Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages, 1964**

Articles 1, 2, and 3 of the *Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages, 1964* state:

“(1) No marriage shall be legally entered into without the full and free consent of both parties, such consent to be expressed by them in person ... as prescribed by law.

(2) States Parties to the present Convention shall ... specify a minimum age for marriage (“not less than 15 years” according to the nonbinding recommendation accompanying this Convention). No marriage shall be legally entered into by any person under this age, except where a competent authority has granted a dispensation as to age, for serious reasons, in the interests of the intending spouses ...

(3) All marriages shall be registered ... by the competent authority.”

#### **The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 1979**

Article 16.1 of the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 1979* prescribes equally for men and women: “(a) The same right to enter into marriage; (b) The same right freely to choose a spouse and to enter into marriage only with their free and full consent; ...

Article 16.2 states: The betrothal and the marriage of a child shall have no legal effect, and all necessary action, including legislation, shall be taken to specify a minimum age for marriage.”

#### **The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, 1990**

Article XXI of the *African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, 1990* states: “Child marriage and the betrothal of girls and boys shall be prohibited and

effective action, including legislation, shall be taken to specify the minimum age for marriage to be eighteen years.”

### **The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), 1989**

The *Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), 1989* has been ratified by all countries in the world. Marriage is not considered directly in the CRC. One must look then to other rights (health, education, survival...) or principles (best interests of the child, development, respect for the views of the child ...) for guidance on the position of the CRC for early marriage. Despite this, it is clear that the Committee places a great deal of importance in ensuring that marriage should not be concluded too early and that the minimum age for marriage should be equal for boys and girls. Among the most pertinent, however, are the followings:

Article 1: A child means every human being below the age of eighteen years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.

Article 2: Freedom from discrimination on any grounds, including sex, religion, ethnic or social origin, birth or other status.

Article 3: In all actions concerning children ... the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.

Article 6: Maximum support for survival and development.

Article 12: The right to express his or her views freely in all matters affecting the child, in accordance with age and maturity.

Article 19: The right to protection from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parents, guardian, or any other person.

Article 24: The right to health and to access to health services; and to be protected from harmful traditional practices.

Articles 28 and 29: The right to education on the basis of equal opportunity.

Article 34: The right to protection from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse.

Article 35: The right to protection from abduction, sales or trafficking.

Article 36: The right to protection from all forms of exploitation prejudicial to any aspect of the child's welfare.

Thus, the *CRC* states in Article 1, that a child is anyone under 18 years of age, and in Article 16 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights it states that persons must be at “full age” at the time of marriage, which must be entered into “freely” and with “full consent.” The *CEDAW* requires minimum age for marriage to be specified by states, and declares child marriages as illegal, under Article 16. In keeping with the spirit of the *CRC*, an

increasing number of laws fix the minimum age at 18 years – the standard also set by the *African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, 1990*.

### **RECOMMENDATION FOR AWARENESS OF CONSEQUENCES OF CHILD MARRIAGE**

Marriage is regarded as a private, even sensitive subject. It is time to raise consciousness about the comprehensiveness of child marriage and its negative impacts. Government should make new laws to control child marriage and establish nonviolent places for girls to gather and socialize to upsurge access to economic skills and resources. It is needed to create awareness among people, particularly the marginal groups.

#### ***Government initiatives***

The government will take necessary steps to eliminate child marriage from the society with a bid to slash the maternal mortality rate in the country. Bangladesh's school program provides free cost of school fees and books for girls in school. So for eliminating child marriage from the society with a bid to slash the maternal mortality rate in the country the government should establish secondary school registration program with parent's commitment about not to marry their daughters until they reach age 18.

#### ***Disseminate information among people by education***

To prevent child marriage, all people need to work together to stop early marriage. At first inform parents and young people about the negative implications of child marriage. Education is the key in this process. Persuading parents to keep their daughters in school is critical for the overall development of girls and postponement of marriage. We shall have to give priority to girls' education.

#### ***Importance of birth certificate***

Birth certificate should be issued for all children. It is regarded as original age certificate of a child. It should be mandatory in Bangladesh that when a child is born, his or her birth certificate has to be done. So, in future when there is a matter of marriage, there will be no confusion.

#### ***Marriage should be registered***

Marriage registration is mandatory in Bangladesh and every marriage should be registered. Based on the law,

marriage certificate is an official document which regulates the rights and responsibilities of a wife, husband and children. Article 61 of the *Civil Code* states: "marriage is recorded in the marriage certificate in three copies by the authorities; the original is maintained by the government institution and each party is granted a copy of this document. The marriage certificate is submitted to the records department after it has been registered in the special offices."

### **Formulated legal mechanism for international instruments**

Bangladesh is one of the signatories of CRC and committed to respect the CRC to establish the rights of children. But there is no mechanism in the legal system of Bangladesh to incorporate directly the principles of international conventions and rules at national levels. Though the international conventions set certain responsibilities for the ratifying states, there is no formal obligation to implement the provisions of the conventions. In this context, the state parties should develop enabling mechanism for implementation of the international standards. To make the CRC effective, it has to be a part of the domestic law as well.

### **Initiative of NGOs and civil society**

To prevent child marriage a wide range of individuals and organizations, from community leaders to international bodies, must take action. We need to create awareness among people, particularly the poor. And also we should give our helping hands to them. NGOs and civil society have a critical role to play in the control of child marriage. It should be raise awareness of the health and rights implications of large spousal age differences and inter-generational sex. Efforts should be taken to support married teenage girls by decreasing their economic vulnerability, offering schooling, civic participation, and livelihoods opportunities, developing intervention.

### **Awareness through Media**

Media (radio, television etc.) plays a vital role in broadcasting different programs about the adverse effect of early marriages that rural people can understand since most of them are illiterate. Media can convince them through different programs against early marriage.

### **Changing attitudes**

Changing attitudes is the strategy that underpins all other efforts to end early marriage. Real progress will come from introducing and promoting initiatives to change

attitudes towards the gender roles of girls and boys in general, and towards the practice of early marriage in particular. There is need to work to change attitudes in families and in societies at large, extend opportunities for childhood learning and education, offer appropriate support to families and children, and seek to have all children – girls and boys – recognized as valuable members of society rather than economic burdens.

### **Conclusion**

Children are not smaller versions of adults but are completely different human beings with different sensibilities. Keeping this in mind, protective legislations and their proper implementation through an effective child-friendly legal system based on reality can safeguard the rights of children. In Bangladesh, child marriage is widespread, particularly in rural areas; although there is a law against it the underlying reasons are poverty and lack of awareness. About 17% of all marriages are to girls who are under the age of 16 years. According to the *Child Marriage Restraint Act*, the minimum legal age for marriage is 18 years for females in Bangladesh. 18 years is supposed to be the minimum age for marriage in Bangladesh. One difficulty in application of the age of consent law is that in rural Bangladesh most marriages are unregistered. The situation is intensified by the fact that birth registration is so irregular that age for marriage may not be known. Although the rights of children of Bangladesh have been protected by the *Constitution* and the various laws formulated at different time, the actual improvement of the overall child rights situation depends on the effective implementation of the laws and policies. Moreover in case of awareness, all of us need to work together relentlessly, utilizing an interdisciplinary approach to the rights construct, to ensure justice for children.

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*Full Length Research Paper*

## The role of religion in modern society: Masses opium or tool for development: A Case Study of Saw-Mill Area, Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria

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This paper discusses the role of religion in modern society. Religion no doubt in the perception of faithful is truly the opium of the masses, it cushions the effects of living in a problem-stricken world characterized by faithlessness and hopelessness. It is the task of religion, once the other-world of truth has vanished, to establish the truth of the world. It is the immediate task of philosophy, which is in the service of religion to unmask self-estrangement in its unholy forms once the holy form of human self-estrangement has been unmasked; religion provides a vent and creates a disconnect between man and hopelessness while reminding us of a life in the hereafter, it absorbs the heart of the pounds of suffering, and puts on man a garb of hope which will get to be shown off on the spiritual and mundane runway. The data used in the study are derived from three sources: a structured questionnaire, documentary sources, and direct observation. The findings revealed that religion as a tool for integration has played more divisive roles than integrating roles and that either in terms of its facilities, personnel, or programs, religion is not predisposed to performing the original function it set out to accomplish. After making short and long term recommendations, it was concluded that, in order for religion to effectively discharge its responsibilities, fundamental steps must be taken to control the socio-psychological basis of religion.

**Key words:** Religion; Society: Masses: Opium; Development.

### INTRODUCTION

Religion is found in all known human societies. Even the earliest societies on record show clear traces of religious symbols and ceremonies. Throughout history, religion has continued to be a central part of societies and human experience, shaping how individuals react to the environments in which they live. Since religion is such an important part of societies around the world, sociologists are very interested in studying it. Sociologists study religion as both a belief system and a social institution. As a belief system, religion shapes what people think and how they see the world. As a social institution, religion is a pattern of social action organized around the beliefs

and practices that people develop to answer questions about the meaning of existence. As an institution, religion persists over time and has an organizational structure into which members are socialized. In studying religion from a sociological perspective, it is not important what one believes about religion. What is important is the ability to examine religion objectively in its social and cultural context. Modern academic sociology began with the study of religion in Emile Durkheim's 1897 *The Study of Suicide* in which he explored the differing suicide rates among Protestants and Catholics (Adeyemo, 2002). Following Durkheim, Karl Marx and Max Weber also

looked at religion's role and influence in other social institutions such as economics and politics. Each major sociological framework has its perspective on religion. For instance, from the functionalist perspective of sociological theory, religion is an integrative force in society because it has the power to shape collective beliefs. It provides cohesion in the social order by promoting a sense of belonging and collective consciousness.

This view was supported by Emile Durkheim. A second point of view, supported by Max Weber, views religion in terms of how it supports other social institutions. Weber thought that the religious belief systems provided a cultural framework that supported the development of other social institutions, such as the economy. While Durkheim and Weber concentrated on how religion contributes to the cohesion of society, Karl Marx focused on the conflict and oppression that religion provided to societies. Marx saw religion as a tool for class oppression in which it promotes stratification because it supports a hierarchy of people on Earth and the subordination of humankind to divine authority.

The role of religion is ambivalent and the practice is considered indispensable in the social space inhabited by man; it has dominated the invisible and impalpable vortex of issues; it is a tool for economic exploitation and social oppression and also a divisive tool that splits the fabric of nationhood through group imposed consciousness that sets the delineating standards on social boundaries. Attempt to foist group opinions and beliefs on non-conformist has sparked series of social upheavals which in most cases terminate in colossal loss of lives and properties. The role of religion will to a large extent be determined by the social milieu, religious doctrines, and the personality of leaders; religion has presented a poisoned chalice to followers who get committed to its cause. Followers have constantly revolved round the orbit of penury while religious leaders basked in stolen affluence. Religion presents a sedative effect with an escapist impact on followers; man is seen as an arbitrary and impulsive creation of a supreme being who controls the universe and decides the fate of men; the creator of all creations spells out modalities and acceptable codes required for existence in the transient world before mortal transcends through a grand initiation known as death to the life in the hereafter.

Many religious leaders have taken advantage of the eternal provisions to cajole and milk followers of their hard earned money. According to Adeyemo (2002), followers are afraid of going in fear of abstractions, but in Marxists paradigm anything which spouts lots of the masses or the truth, anything which says follow the leader, which says the individual does not count in favour of some 'greater good' is most likely spouted by someone who wants power over you, or someone who has already submitted to similar claptrap spouted by somebody else, like a pathetic pyramid sales scam (Alexander, 1997).

For Marx, economics is what constitutes the base of all of human life and history, generating division of labor, class struggle, and all the social institutions which are supposed to maintain the status quo. Those social institutions are a superstructure built upon the base of economics, totally dependent upon material and economic realities but nothing else. All of the institutions which are prominent in our daily lives — marriage, church, government, arts, etc, can only be truly understood when examined in relation to economic forces. According to Marx, religion is one of those social institutions which are dependent upon the material and economic realities in a given society. It has no independent history but is instead the creature of productive forces.

Berry (1997) reproduced the work of Marx, when he opined that the religious world is but the reflex of the real world. Religion is indeed man's self-consciousness and self-awareness so long as he has not found himself. The state and the society produce religion, which is an inverted consciousness of the world, because they are an inverted world. Religion is the general theory of this world: its encyclopaedic compendium, its logic in popular form, its spiritual point, its enthusiasm, its moral sanction, its solemn complement, and its universal basis of consolation and justification. It is the fantastic realization of the human essence since the human essence has not acquired any true reality.

Religion simultaneously serves as the opium of the masses and also a tool for development but the opium impact is more pronounced than the development impulse given by religion.

### Conceptual clarifications

**RELIGION:** According to Chonko (1992), religion is a collection of cultural systems, belief systems, and world views that establish symbols that relate humanity to some supernatural or inanimate objects who are revered and worshipped through ritual practices and there exists a code of existence that guides adherents on the why and how of social existence; an icon is formed and harmonized as the rallying point of faithfuls and it could include sun, moon, river, fire or some animate personalities. Armentor (1995) made an unequivocal historical that the oldest religions include Judaism, Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity, Islam, Bahai, Taoism, Buddhism, Jainism, Confucianism, Shinto e.t.c

**OPIUM:** This is an air-dried milky exudation from unripe capsules of *Papaver somniferum* and *P.album* (the opium poppies). It contains some 25 alkaloids; the most important being codein, morphine (from which Heroin is derived), NOSCAVINE, PAPAVERINE and THEBAIN all of which can be used for their narcotic and analgesic effects. Opium is poisonous in large doses; because it is highly addictive, production and cultivation of the poppies

is prohibited by most nations by international agreement, and its sales or possession for other than medical uses is strictly prohibited by federal, state and local laws. (Berry 2002).

**DEVELOPMENT:** DeCreamer (2003) conceived of development as a qualitative increase in the living standard of a defined group of people; it translates to leading healthy lives, being knowledgeable, having access to the resources needed for a decent standard of living and being able to participate in the life of the community

### Opium as a metaphor

Edwards (1999) alluded to historical and philosophical statement: "Religion is the opium of the people"; it is one of the most frequently paraphrased statements of Karl Marx.

It was translated from the German original, "*Die Religion ... ist das Opium des Volkes*" and is often referred to as "religion is the opiate of the masses." The quotation originates from the introduction of his 1843 work *Contribution to Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* which was subsequently released one year later in Marx's own journal *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher*, a collaboration with Arnold Ruge.

The phrase "This opium you feed your people" appears in 1797 in Marquis de Sade's text *L'Histoire de Juliette*. This has been translated variously as 'religion is the opiate of the masses', 'religion is the opium of the masses' and, in a version which German scholars prefer 'religion is the opium of the people'.

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The data used in this paper were generated from Saw-Mill area, Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria, located in the heart of the metropolis of Ilorin. As at the time of the field work, Saw-Mill area is a densely populated area in Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria, which proved suitably for the research objective. Stratified sampling was used to choose 62 respondents.

Methods of data collection were employed, namely: (1) Direct observation, (2) Secondary sources (3) Questionnaire. More information was obtained through secondary sources. While the data collected via direct observation and secondary sources were analyzed qualitatively, the data collected through questionnaire were analyzed quantitatively.

### DATA PRESENTATION AND FINDINGS

The data in Table 1 show that a typical resident in Saw-Mill area Ilorin, Nigeria is in the prime of his life (18-29 years). He is most likely single and has secondary education; he is either unemployed or self employed (or apprentice) in the lowest occupational ladder. The bulk of the respondents basically practice Islam (72.4%), while

**Table 1.** Social demographic characteristics of respondents N = 62.

Age	Relative frequency (%)
18-23	46.2
24-29	31.8
30 years and above	22
Gender	Relative frequency (%)
Male	93.54
Female	6.45
Religion	Relative frequency (%)
Christianity	24.8
Islam	72.4
Others	2.8
Educational Attainment	Relative frequency (%)
No formal education	19.5
Primary/Koranic	38.5
Secondary	39.3
Tertiary	2.7
Employment status	Relative frequency (%)
Unemployed	56.6
Self-Employed	42.0
Civil Servants	1.4
Total	64

Source: Researcher's Field Work 2013.

24.8% are Christians and 2.8 practice other religions. Thus, it is clear that a typical resident in Saw-Mill Area Ilorin, Nigeria is a member of the lower socio-economic class in the contemporary Nigerian society.

The concept of religion went un-criticized in the demonological era and metaphysical stages of human social existence. Religion as an abstract concept enjoins all to cast their cares and burdens on the supreme beings who oversee the affairs of men.

The political strength-hold of religious leaders and their over-reaching influence during the theological stage of human social evolution suppressed the emergence of religious criticism but in the 18th and 19th centuries, a more naturalistic approach developed. One person who attempted to examine religion from an objective, scientific perspective was Karl Marx.

Marx's analysis and critique of religion is perhaps one of the most famous and most quoted by theist and atheist alike.

Fajana (2000) observed that Marx actually said very little about religion directly; in all of his writings, he hardly ever addresses religion in a systematic fashion; even

**Table 2.** Respondents' opinion of the objectives of religion.

Responses	Relative frequency (%)
Oppression	64.6
Reform/Prepare adherents for paradise	22.6
Others	12.8
Total	62

Source: Researcher's Field Work 2013.

though he touches on it frequently in books, speeches and pamphlets, his critique of religion forms simply one piece of his overall theory of society. According to Marx, religion is an expression of material realities and economic injustice. Thus, problems in religion are ultimately problems in society. Religion is not the disease, but merely a symptom. It is used by oppressors to make people feel better about the distress they experience due to being poor and exploited.

### Religion as an opium in modern society (negative role)

#### Religion and social oppression

The data reveal that 64.6% of the respondents were of the opinion that religion is an instrument of oppression. Only 22.6% perceive religion as preparing adherents for a life in the hereafter.

These findings show that majority of the respondent (64.6%) hold a negative opinion about the objective of religion. Respondents believe that the main objective of religion in Nigerian is to oppress the poor people (Table 2).

These finding indicate that there is a divergence between religious policy and respondent' opinion as to the objectives of the prison. While religious policy is said to be the pursuit of a glorious life in the hereafter, religious adherents see things differently. Furthermore, religious adherents assessed religious leaders in relation to their integrity and incorruptibility. In all, 43.2 % alleged that religious leaders are corrupt. While 27.4 percent maintain that religious leaders are bias along tribal and religious lines. 17.4% are of the view that whatever anomaly is observed among religious leaders is a reflection of the whole society and religious leaders must not be blamed for a problem created by the society as a whole.

These findings are interesting for two reasons. First, they suggest that religious adherents are aware of the corrupt practices going on in the world of religion. If adherents can afford huge stolen money, religious leaders will hold them in high esteem and continually pray for

them.

This finding corroborates Brockner (2010)'s observation that: "some religious officials ... constitute themselves into bankers for criminal adherent, helping criminal adherent to obtain contrabands, such as cigarettes and marijuana. In some cases, religious leaders serve as the link between the criminal and the outside world for a price."

In most societies social injustices have continued to thrive unabated, the elite have consistently unleashed mayhem and untold economic hardship on the masses, the indices of corruption has gained astronomical influence which further deepens the gulf between the haves and the have not. Religion has assumed a dangerous stand as a tool of oppression by the elite on the masses and masses on masses; it helps accentuate regional and ethnic distinctions, so many merciless human massacres have been witnessed which were occasioned by grievances premised on religious differences. Religious faithfuls use the parachute of religion to achieve a safe-landing in a frustrated world.

Religion is [the world's] general basis for consolation...The struggle against religion is...a struggle against that world whose spiritual aroma is religion. Religious suffering is at the same time an expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the sentiment of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people. The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of [people], is a demand for their real happiness (*Marx*).

Guest (1969) opined that violent subcultures and counter cultures have emerged, and the immediate fear is the political undertone these belligerent religious sects have towards challenging the existence of the federal government and calling for the abolition of institutional practices that have been in existence since the days of yores; the manner in which the demand of these extremists is tabled is confrontational and bloodthirsty. Several lives were lost in the vainglorious pursuit of their unjust argument. We have used the Christian Bible, Muslim quran, hindus veda e.t.c as if they are a mere special constable's handbook, an opium dose for keeping beasts of burden patient while they are overloaded.



**Table 3.** The Relationship between Gender and Respondents' view on if religious leaders are after their own wellbeing.

	No, religious leaders are after their own economic wellbeing %		Yes, religious leaders are not after their own economic wellbeing %		Total %	
Male	11	17.7	47	75.8	58	93.54
Female	4	6.45	0	0	4	6.45
Total	15	24.15	47	75.8	62	100

Source: Researcher's Field Work 2013.

The finding reveals that 24.15% of the respondents stated clearly that religious leaders are not after their own economic wellbeing, while 75.8% opined that religious leaders are basically after their own wellbeing leading to massive exploitation of the masses (Table 3).

According to Ayanni (1992), it is a gory sight witnessing the monumental decay that has engulfed our religious terrain; religious leaders including pastors and imams have converted religion to a damaged ATM that should spit money on demand. Pastors and imams have ascended an elite position in the society. Cases of misconduct and financial mismanagement have become a recurring decimal in religious circles.

They ride in posh cars and own massive mansions in both home and abroad while members of their congregation wallow in abject poverty. Regardless of the mighty cathedrals and imposing mansions, members of the congregation whose money was used to erect the imposing structures still live below the poverty bracket while pastors and imams boast of multi-million dollar empires. The only doctrine and scripture consistently held unto by religious leaders is the version of the holy book which says:

*give and it shall be given unto you, in good measures, press down, shaking together shall men give unto your bosom (Holy Bible)*

*Ye are cursed with a curse, for ye have robbed me. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in my house, and prove me now herewith, saith the lord of hosts, if I will not open you windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing, there shall not be room enough to receive it (Malachi 3 vs 9-10).*

Leaders do not preach or teach the principles of wealth creation or development of investment mentalities; the sermon from the podium is give, and give with much emphasis on offerings and closeness to political looters. Brockner (2010)'s findings further corroborate the findings in this study, when he gave a list of Clerics in Nigeria as well as their network. Forbes rating of super rich pastors in Nigeria includes.

#### (i) Bishop David Oyedepo

Affiliation: Living Faith World Outreach Ministry, aka Winners Chapel

Estimated net worth: \$150 million

David Oyedepo is Nigeria's wealthiest preacher. Ever since he founded the Living Faith World Outreach Ministry in 1981, it has grown to become one of Africa's largest congregations. The Faith Tabernacle, where he hosts three services every Sunday, is Africa's largest worship center, with a seating capacity of 50,000. Oyedepo owns four private jets and homes in London and the United States. He also owns Dominion Publishing House, a thriving publishing company that publishes all his books (which are often centered on prosperity).

He founded and owns Covenant University, one of Nigeria's leading tertiary institutions, and Faith Academy, an elite high school.

#### (ii) Chris Oyakhilome

Church: Believers' Loveworld Ministries, a.k.a Christ Embassy

Estimated net worth: \$30 million - \$50 million

#### (iii) Temitope Joshua

Church: Synagogue Church Of All Nations [SCOAN]

Estimated net worth: \$10 million- \$15 million

#### (iv) Matthew Ashimolowo

Kingsway International Christian Centre [KICC]

Estimated net worth: \$6 million-\$10 million

#### (v) Chris Okotie

House of God Church

Net worth: \$3 million - \$10 million

Source: Brockner (2010) Religious Criminalization in Sub Sahara Africa

And within the Muslim fold, the super rich Islamic clerics include the following.

#### (i) Sheik Ahmad Abubakar Gumi

Estimated net worth: \$6 million-\$10 million

**(ii) Sheik Gazali Akewadola**

Net worth: \$2 million - \$8 million

Source: Brockner (2010) Religious Criminalization in Sub Sahara Africa

A number of Nigerian Muslim clerics and pastors own private jets in a country where a large chunk of the population live below a \$1.00 per day. It speaks of the monetization of the Christianity and other religions in Nigeria. In the real sense of it, Jesus was poor. He died poor that we may be rich. How then is it that leaders of churches are rich while the followers are poor? These pastors have transformed to a semi god. Before it used to be a poster of Jesus Christ, but now it is pictures of individuals; the celebrity posture pastors assume during religious campaigns is worrisome. Pentecostal churches are springing up in record numbers because of the prosperity sought by many poor; the number of denominations we have in Nigeria is not in any world.

**Religious sects and social violence****Boko haram impasse**

Flanders (1975) observed that religion is synonymous to militancy, weapons and ammunitions have become essential parts of religious apparels. The alqueda forces, the Israeli and Palestine, face off, the Afghanistan and Pakistan fracas, the blood thirsty boko haram are all cogent examples of religious nightmares. The boko haram impasse would be typified and expanded to capture the religious violence obtainable in the globe.

Chapman (2010) submitted that since boko haram came into limelight sometime in 2008, the Boko Haram phenomenon has wrought a lot of socio-economic havoc on Nigeria. With every attack, members of this dreaded sect inflict massive destruction that could take a long period and at enormous cost to fix. Lately, however, the Boko Haram phenomenon has begun to cause so much psychological stress to majority of citizens of Nigerian extraction.

This is as a result of the deliberate, nay mischievous, profiling of almost every person, especially the Muslim population, in this hitherto most peaceful country, as either instigating the sect or subtly encouraging its dastardly acts. boko Haram, figuratively, "Western education is a sin") is a Nigerian Islamist group that seeks the imposition of Shariah law throughout the whole of Nigeria. The group presently has an undefined structure and chain of command. The official name of the group is *Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad*, which in Arabic means People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad.

It became known internationally following sectarian violence in Nigeria in 2009. As of 2011 it is thought to

be responsible for increasingly violent and sophisticated attacks, with at least 327 people killed in 2011 through November 6 (Handy 2010). Boko Haram uses the bomb attacks in Nigeria as a strategy of tension. Its aim is to create tension and division in Nigeria.

Boko Haram has become a major problem for the country's peace, security, and stability, even if we do not want to accept that the fundamentalist group is not just about terror. The group is doing the country a lot of harm through its terror attacks. Beer parlour gossips project Boko Haram as an Islamist sect that has the nodding of leading northern political leaders. Religion has been captured by political elites and the religious masses are been tossed like soulless marionettes to whet the ego of the power thirsty political elites who take advantage of the political aperture to unleash wanton destruction of unquantifiable dimension through recasting all political problems in religious statement.

The cultural ideology of this group is unbelievable which includes the call for the abolition of secular Nigerian constitution and consequent sharianization and extension of Islamic jurisprudence over the entire country; also the opposition to western education by the sect is also a bold attempt to interrogate the philosophy of education that has been in existence since the Amalgamation of 1914 (Adeyemo, 2010)

Adeyemo (2010) went further to expound the basic beliefs of boko Haram. He advanced that boko haram opposes not only Western education, but Western culture and modern science as well. The group also forbids the wearing of shirts and pants and the act of voting in elections. In its view, the Nigerian state is run by non-believers. According to Mohammed Yusuf, the then leader of the sect,

*I would reject the fact that the earth is a sphere if it was contrary to Islamic teachings, along with Darwinism and the fact that rain comes from water evaporated by the sun (Mohammed Yusuf Becquart, 2008).*

This extremist religious sects have unleashed untold hardship on Nigerians and have retrogressed all economic efforts geared towards economic advancement and social emancipation; a huge number of policemen have been killed and they include SP F.U FAROUK 6 PMF Maiduguri, DSP AZUBUIKE, Inspector Haziell Audu, PC Hamidu Ijidenga, PC Joshua Garba, PC Samaila Ojo, Sgt. Adamu Idi, Sgt. Daniel Ekong, Sgt. Danjuma Bawa, Abdulmuinu Ngama, Sgt. Joseph Maku, Sgt. Mohammed Musa, SP. Mohammed Usman Faruk; other mayhems unleashed on Nigerians by this unrepentant religious apologists according to Brockner (2011) include.

On September 7, 2010, Boko Haram freed over 700 inmates from a prison in Bauchi State

On Friday January 28, 2011, the Borno State candidate

of the All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP) for the April 2011 gubernatorial elections was assassinated, along with his brother, four police officers and a 12-year old boy. The killing was politically motivated .

On April 1, Boko Haram members attacked a police station in Bauchi .

On April 9, a polling center in Maiduguri was bombed.

On April 15, the Maiduguri office of the Independent National Electoral Commission was bombed by members of boko haram, and several people were shot in a separate incident on the same day.

On April 20, Boko Haram killed a Muslim cleric and ambushed several police officers in Maiduguri.

On April 22, Boko Haram freed 14 prisoners during a jailbreak in Yola, Adamawa State

On June 17, 2011, the group attempted a bombing attack on the police force headquarters in Abuja; the attack was the first suicide bombing in Nigeria's history and it specifically targeted Police Inspector-General Hafiz Ringim.

On June 26, 2011, the sect carried out a bombing attack on a beer garden in Maiduguri; militants on motorcycles threw explosives into the drinking spot, killing about 25 people.

On June 27, 2011, another bombing in Maiduguri attributed to the group killed at least two girls and wounded three customs officials.

On July 03, 2011, a bombing in a beer garden in Maiduguri attributed to the group killed at least twenty people.

On July 10, 2011, a bombing at the All Christian Fellowship Church in Suleja, Niger State.

On August 12, 2011, a prominent Muslim Cleric Liman Bana was shot dead by Boko Haram. He died after sustaining gunshot wounds while walking home from conducting prayers at the main mosque in Ngala.

On August 26, the UN headquarters in Abuja was blown up by a suicide car bomber, leaving at least 21 dead and dozens more injured.

October 22, 2011: Spokesman Abu Qaqa indicated that the militant group had slain Alhaji Zakariya Isa, a Nigerian Television Authority journalist, claiming that he was a government informant.

November 5, 2011: A series of coordinated attacks in Borno and Yobe states, primarily around Damaturu killed at least 67 people, leaving a new police headquarters in ruins, and government offices burned. Source: Yesufu (2012): adapted from the book, *The dynamics of Spiritual Relations*.

### Religion and political exploitation

Religion has grown to become the manual for political exploitation in most nations of the World. Theology, as enshrined in the philosophical handout forbids religious

leaders from playing a participatory role in the political exploitation of the masses. Religious leaders have lost their pride of place as custodians of truth; political looters have seen a safe haven in places of religious worship. Resources are siphoned from the mundane world to the world of the sacred.

These monies so transferred in an unholy alliance constitute pollutants and erode the intended reverence for the supernatural being. Cases are rife of avaricious individuals who have been apprehended in places of religious worship on account of financial mismanagement of public or private funds entrusted in their care. Religious leaders are not exempted from the spree of religious jamboree as several church funds have been mismanaged by the highly placed religious leaders. Religion can be likened to an investment, and religious been the manager. Religion has de-emphasized.

### Religion as a tool for development (positive role)

#### Religion and social development

If Karl Marx provides us with an account in which religion serves merely as social opiate and agent of social control, Max Weber offers us a different vision, one in which religion can in some instances be an independent variable and, as such, a source of social change. The study of comparative religion forms a major part of Weber's program.

Weber's approach to religion and social change involves a particular conception of the relationship between interests (material and ideal) and ideas; some sociologists consider Weber's understanding of this relationship to be one of his most important contributions to the sociology of religion. Weber provides a description of this relationship, almost off-handedly, in a larger discussion of salvation and capitalism: "Not ideas, but material and ideal interests, directly govern [human] conduct. Weber's sociology of religion, nonetheless, is notable for its claims that religion can be a source of social change. Weber's work beyond *The Protestant Ethic* similarly focuses on the way that ideas act back on interests and shape activities, especially economic activities. For example, Weber views salvation as a key idea that drives action, noting that his "concern is essentially with the quest for salvation...insofar as it produced certain consequences for practical behavior in the world," particularly "a positive orientation to mundane affairs".

Weber begins *The Protestant Ethic* by noting an apparent association between certain religious affiliations (particularly Protestantism) and business success, and suggests that this association might indicate a causal connection between the two. He then goes on to characterize the "spirit of capitalism" by quoting a number

of passages from Benjamin Franklin's writing that he considers exemplary of this spirit in its purest, ideal-typical form. At the core of the spirit of capitalism is a work ethic in which any time spent not actually making money is wasted time. Franklin champions the pursuit of profit for its own sake, and by the most systematic and rational means possible. Weber identifies Franklin's approach, not as form of business practice, but as an ethos (or, as Weber describes it, an ethic). It is this ethic, claims Weber, that is specific to modern western capitalism, and it is based on Luther's idea of the calling or vocation. At this historical point in Weber's story, most of the key precursors to modern capitalism are in place. Popularization of the idea of the calling has drawn religious life out of the monastery and planted it in "the world."

Labeling religion as the "opium for the people" or the "opiate of the masses" is a fairly common tactic used by those dismissive of religion. Using phrases like this is a way to blow off religion without trying to counter or discuss it. Karl Marx was not the first to use this phrase, but he is linked with it when this attack is used. Marx's contention was that religion gives people artificial, illusory happiness like opium does to a drug addict and freeing people from that unrealistic illusion was part of building a better society.

Beginning primarily with Marx, the "opium for the masses" accusation is often used by atheists. Because they reject the existence of God, they have to somehow explain the continuing existence of religion. They see no need for religion, so they do not understand others' need for it. Marx was denouncing religion in general by using "people" in a demeaning sense to mean the poor, ignorant, and easily deceived. The essential argument of the "opium for the masses" saying is that religion is for weak-minded and emotionally disturbed people who need a crutch to get through life. Atheists today make similar claims, such as the idea that God is an imaginary friend for adult.

There are strong logical, scientific, and philosophical arguments for the existence of God. The fact that humanity is damaged and in need of redemption/salvation, the core message of religion is clearly seen throughout the world. In the history of humanity, the vast majority of the most intellectually brilliant writers and thinkers have been theists.

The data reveal that 64.6% of the respondents were of the opinion that religion performs social control functions. Only 22.6% perceive religion as not playing any role in social control (Table 4). These findings show that religion instill moral codes into the lives of adherents. The role of religion as a tool for social control cannot be overemphasized; several moral miscreants would have been let loose without the taming impact of religion it reinforces and mirror acceptable standards while directing faithfuls towards earning a place in the coveted

**Table 4.** Respondents' Opinion on if religion perform the function of social control.

Responses	Relative frequency (%)
Yes	64.6
No	22.6
don't know	12.8
Total	62

Source: Researcher's Field Work 2013.

life in the hereafter. Several callous hearts weaned on the diet of banditry have felt the need to forsake unbecoming acts that are not in tandem with societal standards. These have helped to contain deviant acts and consequently reconstitute the social foundations of the society.

Religion has contributed immensely to growth and development in the society and this contributions spans all domains of human endeavour. Religious institutions have swept out the debris of illiteracy through pronounced presence in the education sector; it is a fashionable trend for religious institutions to own universities, colleges and primary schools, it is an elite statement which all religious institutions have stirred hard to make. The cobweb of unemployment has not been left standing, as religious institutions have assisted immensely in mopping up the unemployment statistics through job creation.

The role of religion in nation building can also not be overemphasized; through sermons and teachings that are located in the premises of the need for moral rectitude, it has placed emphasis on the need for peaceful co-existence in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society through emphasis on tolerance. The hold of religion in our everyday existence is encompassing

### Observation

It has been observed that over the years that religiosity has waned if measured side by side with the growing influence of religion; the codes of conducts ingrained in the various religious codes have been left unheeded with a consequent impact of being left with shaft religion. So many adherents have lost touch with the eternal classical message and the mundane has replaced the sacred. The political undertone that characterizes most religious doctrines has clouded sense of judgment and adherents are forced draft into the world of excesses and extremism.

The value in religion is eroding gradually and what we have as followers are at best bunch of unrepentant criminals or at worst extremists who take delight in enforcing their own religious beliefs and doctrines on others who belong to different religious fold.

## Conclusion

Religion no doubt in the perception of faithfuls is truly the opium of the masses; it cushions the effects of living in a problem-stricken world characterized by faithlessness and hopelessness. It is the task of religion, once the other-world of truth has vanished, to establish the truth of the world. It is the immediate task of philosophy, which is in the service of religion to unmask self-estrangement in its unholy forms once the holy form of human self-estrangement has been unmasked; it provides a vent and creates a disconnect between man and hopelessness while reminding us of a life in the hereafter; it absorbs the heart of the pounds of suffering, and puts on man a garb of hope which will get to be shown off on the spiritual and mundane runway. Thus, the criticism of Heaven turns into the criticism of Earth, the criticism of religion into the criticism of law, and the criticism of theology into the criticism of politics, because our existence is determined by a supernatural being who takes charge of the affairs of man.

On the other hand, religion has played a counter productive role in our society, which further stifles development. Religious theories have become negotiable at the intellectual market and consistently sold to the highest political bidder. These theories also become a radical material force as the evident proof of radicalism and practical energy is manifested in the dogmatic addiction to religious doctrines and an unbridled attempt to foist doctrines on other non adherents, which has resulted into monumental destructions of lives and properties while rubbing the shine off the beauty of nationhood and statehood. An attempt was made to chronicle the dastardly act of religious bigots in Nigeria as a microcosm of the global macrocosm and it was observed that religious organizations represent fertile grounds for training deviants in the art of terrorism.

From the observations made so far, man is the highest essence for man; there should then be a call for a categorical imperative to overthrow all relations in which man is debased, enslaved, abandoned or despised in the name of reverence of a supernatural being.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

To curb the excesses of religion as an opium and for it to take the bold front as a tool for nation building and development, the recommendations proffered include,

1. All revolutionary theologian who believes in protecting the daily run of evangelism and its adherents, should be cautioned on the nature of sermon emanating from their pulpits or religious stables; emphasis should be placed on religious tolerance and the why and how to live peacefully in multi-religious society.
2. Any religion that gives false hope or fails to improve the moral tone of the country in the direction of development should be considered as a nightmare and as such should be outlawed from operating in the society of humans.
3. In times of conflict situations, religious leaders whose sect are participants in social violence should be arrested and imprisoned. This is necessary in the face of the religious and physical assault on people so as to draw a line of safety where they can return. This would ensure that war incisive and escapist sermons from imam and pastors or other religious leaders do not hold sway and adherents of a particular religion would know that their leaders would be held accountable for any nefarious or dastardly act perpetrated by them.
4. Balance sheets and account books of religious institutions shall be kept and duly audited by external bodies, so as to determine the tax accruable from these religious institutions. The era of business as usual should see its last days.
5. Offerings and tithes shall be tailored along pattern of employment; this should be pegged at a determinable rate so as to forestall pilfering from the mundane world in the name of performing a religious obligation.
6. A wake-up call shall be served on all legs of the tripod: the masses, the society at large and religious institutions on the need to eschew illusions and dwell more on reality which would form the epicenter of development in the society.

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Full Length Research Paper

# Genesis of bureaucratic power and its prospects of decline in India: A case study of Jammu and Kashmir

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**Bureaucratic power is a fact of life in the present political and administrative processes throughout the world. It is inherent in all administrative systems and so is the case in the state of Jammu and Kashmir, India. Bureaucracy in J&K emerged as an offshoot of the British Colonial rule in India. The rule ended but the legacy still persists. Over-bureaucracy in the system led to the undue increase in the bureaucratic power. This excessive power became unacceptable to the common masses in J&K. The situation got aggravated due to the increasing inaccessibility of this bureaucracy and its recognition as elitism. The public in J&K, being vulnerable economically, socially and psychologically due to the past political turmoil of two decades and undue discrimination at the hands of the central government, portrayed a feeling and attitude of awe, fear, and disgust towards the rising bureaucratic structure. The bureaucracy in J&K needs to desist from rampantly using its power, which draws its vitality from the resources allocated to it. At the same time, it needs to make a judicious use of these resources. The present paper depicts the rise of bureaucratic power in J&K, with its inherent pitfalls, if used indiscriminately. This paper also portrays the probability of its decline in case the reins are taken over by the citizenry as a result of an administrative revolution.**

**Key words:** Legal-rational authority, elitism, accountability, bureaucracy, bureaucratization, politicization, inaccessibility, popular control, sunshine laws, ombudsman, magic shield, performance indicators, government service, public service.

## INTRODUCTION

The rise and expansion of public bureaucracies the world over have generated a great deal of hostility and awe amongst the public, for whom the services of the bureaucrats originated in the first place. The same stands true for the state of Jammu and Kashmir, an area in the northern-most part of India. The emergence and growth of bureaucracy could be attributed to the complex socio-economic and political needs and conditions that arose around the world. Bureaucracy did not exist in its basic practical form in the earlier periods, but gained prominence in the nineteenth century as a concept and an institutional format, for the accomplishment of large-scale multiple and complex tasks. The emergence of the

concept of efficiency in relation to time, resources and productivity demands efficient machinery for their effective co-ordination. Today, bureaucracy is the major institution and social technique for handling and controlling the affairs of modern nations [Kumar, 1985]

When India gained independence in 1947, Jammu and Kashmir was being ruled by *Maharajas* (kings). The emergence of a political leader at that time awakened the masses of J&K towards a new era of political enlightenment. But this visionary movement was short lived and the people were once again left in the lurch, as accession to India became inevitable. As the dynamic leadership of J&K, which had lately emerged, became coloured with

certain motivating factors, the masses of J&K could resist no more. Newly exposed to the political movements and uprisings, the people lost their direction. With the complete accession of J&K to India, the reins were taken over by the Government of India. This started the era of political instability there. The government in J&K started with the non-local bureaucracy, whose impersonal attitude and apathy towards the locals aggravated the situation. The bureaucracy that arose in J&K was simply an extension of the British Colonial Administrative System. Thus, the bureaucracy came to be seen as a threat to democracy, and people's rights and dignity in J&K.

Bureaucratic power is the most fundamental ingredient present in the political and administrative processes. The power bases are mostly inherent in the nature of the bureaucracy itself. All bureaucracies share certain legal, material and strategic organizational resources. The legal system provides a basis for bureaucracy's existence and specifies its powers, subscribing a legal authority to it. Materially, bureaucracies have access to all the monetary and infrastructural resources. The strategic-organizational resources constitute the expertise, knowledge and specialization of the bureaucrats. They are the monopolistic providers of services and the public is largely dependent on them. They are also permanent actors and enjoy the power of continuity. Ultimately, the policies have to be executed by the bureaucrats.

In most of the countries of the world, there exists a politico-administrative relationship, characterized by more complex patterns of interaction and interdependence. It portrays a two-way street model phenomenon. On the one hand, there is "politicization of the bureaucracy"- the policy makers have increasingly come to realize that the public administration is a source of tremendous executive powers and capabilities which require strong political control to ensure that they serve the objectives formulated by the policy makers. On the other hand, there is "bureaucratization of politics" - the civil service has become politically more assertive, more engaged in creating networks and linkages to other organizations and more inclined to use its discretion to pursue its own interests and ideals due to its higher degree of continuity and specialized expertise [Pierre, 1995].

Max Weber, bureaucracy's most important academic expositor, gave the following statements in 'Economy and Society' about bureaucracy:

As an instrument of rationally organizing authority relations, bureaucracy was and is a power instrument of the first order, for one who controls the bureaucratic apparatus. Where administration has been completely bureaucratized, the resulting system of domination is practically indestructible [Talcott, 1968].

In view of the growing indispensability of the state bureaucracy and its corresponding increase in power

how can there be any guarantee that any powers will remain, which can check and effectively control the tremendous influence of this stratum [Malcolm, 1994].

Ultimately, political issues become bureaucratic issues because bureaucrats have action [Larry, 1992]. Policies have to be executed by the bureaucrats finally. Besides, politics is endowed with the characteristic feature of being all pervasive and thus it pervades into the bureaucratic system all too smoothly.

The increasing bureaucratic influence can be perceived both positively and negatively. While the positive impact of the bureaucratic power may be felt on wider platforms, where it acts as a check against the increasing politicization in the society, the negative impact is rampantly felt by the public. The creation of excessive power in the bureaucratic structure has led to fear and indignation among the citizenry and widened the gulf between the public and bureaucracy in J&K.

The then existing government made policies for J&K, which were not people-friendly, thus sowing the seeds of rebellion among the Kashmiri youths. The situation aggravated in the later decades and finally exploded in the form of militancy in the 1980s. Administration in J&K almost became defunct for more than two decades. The common masses became demotivated and demoralised. The administrative bureaucracy was associated with the remnants of the colonial rule and thus people started perceiving bureaucracy with hatred and disgust. They distanced themselves from the government. Thus, alienation of the common masses from them started and further gave rise to many vices in the whole administrative setup. People completely lost faith in the bureaucracy, as most of the bureaucrats had been selected through unfair means, were not people-friendly and depicted an unproductive elitist class.

Even the most democratically conceived government behaved as if its own survival, rather than the people's welfare, is the paramount good. This happens because the government's ordinary day to day operations depend on entrenched "public servants" – the bureaucrats – who are always most concerned about protecting and expanding their own power [Richard, 1976]. They come to think of government as a kind of a private institution that exists for their sake and this makes them deeply committed to preserving the system, which they have come to believe of as "their system". Thus, they want nothing to threaten the system because that would threaten their self interests.

### **Analytical approach**

The study is a sociological investigation based on the primary source information from the field. It is a "mixed-method research" as it includes both qualitative as well as quantitative elements. It is a qualitative study, as throughout an effort has been made to understand



human behaviour and the reasons that govern such behaviour in the society. On the other hand, it is a quantitative study, because there was a systematic empirical investigation, in which data were collected for analysis. The study is also "analytical" as the facts and information collected through the primary and secondary sources are used to analyze and make a critical evaluation of the whole material. A thorough analysis is done of the problems faced by the bureaucracy in J&K and the prospects of this institution in J&K in the future.

J&K state bureaucracy presently consists of a total of 580 male and female officers from the rural and urban areas of the state as well as other parts of the country. These officers belong to three different bureaucratic levels: senior, middle and junior, with the corresponding income categories and experience spans. The J&K bureaucracy is the focus or universe of the research and thus includes all the bureaucratic personnel belonging to both the divisions of the state: Jammu and Kashmir, and all the cadres and fields of administration.

The "Stratified Random Sampling" technique has been used for selecting the sample for the study. In this technique, the population, J&K bureaucrats, has been stratified into a number of non-overlapping sub-populations or strata, and sample items/units have been selected from each stratum. These items /units have been selected on the basis of simple random sampling procedure. Thus, 100 bureaucrats have been selected from the universe as a sample. They comprise 17.24% of the present J&K bureaucracy (total 580), which is the desired sample strength. The entry-level bureaucrats are completely excluded from the sample as they are devoid of the potential bureaucratic experience.

The "Interview Schedule Technique" has been used for the primary collection of information. A questionnaire was framed with the questions on the relevant themes and the data collected from the sample in the form of an interview, based on the questionnaire. The methods of observation and discussions were used to support the analytical results. The data and information gathered from the field were statistically treated and sociologically investigated.

### **Theoretical perspectives on bureaucratic power**

The phenomenon of bureaucratic power is a complex process. Max Weber defined "power" as the ability to get things done your way in spite of resistance from others. Weber also discussed the concept of "authority" (power which is regarded as being proper, appropriate, legitimate etc. by subordinates or others). According to Weber, there are three kinds of authority: traditional authority, charismatic authority and legal-rational authority. *Traditional authority* refers to authority based on customs and traditions. *Charismatic authority* refers to authority which arises because a person is perceived as being one

who possesses extraordinary qualities by one's followers. *Legal-rational authority* arises from the position one holds in a bureaucracy or organization. High government officials and top managers in private companies exert legal-rationality because of the position they hold within the organization. It needs to be pointed out that these three kinds of authority can overlap [Malcolm, 1994].

Weber's view is that power does not arise from control of economic resources alone. Groups which do not possess much wealth can also be powerful. Weber's view of power is zero sum, that is, the exercise of power often benefits one group at the expense of another group. While recognizing bureaucracy as the most efficient form of organization and even indispensable for the modern state, Weber also saw it as a threat to individual freedom. He also saw the ongoing bureaucratization leading to dehumanization in which increasing rationalization of human life traps individuals in a bureaucratic, rule-based, rational control.

Parsons described bureaucratic power in his own terms. He emphasized social stratification system with highly specialized division of labour. According to him, it inevitably leads to inequality in terms of power and prestige [ibid]. Parsons associates social status in the society directly with power, while ignoring all other desirables for the same. Besides, he defines social inequality as inevitable for the social existence, which is quite irrelevant in the present scenario. Team work is given more impetus for effective cooperation and results, in the contemporary times, rather than exercise of power due to unequal status in the society.

According to Parsons (1947) and Gouldner (1954), authority due to the "legal incumbency of office" and "technical competence" only works if superiors have more knowledge and skill, but often this is not the case. Parsons draws attention to the possible conflict which might arise between a bureaucrat's authority derived from his position in the hierarchy and that derived from technical expertise. If these do not match and are nonexistent in the same person, it gives rise to an internal conflict between the boss and subordinates [Talcott, 1960].

Selznick identifies the dysfunctional consequences of bureaucracy. Most of the dysfunctions with regard to treatment of procedures and rules lead to delay, red-tapism, unresponsiveness, self-centeredness, corruption, avoidance of personal responsibility and quest for power [Philip, 1957]. This transition in the bureaucracy for the worse has resulted in the lack of public confidence and trust in the machinery of administration. This is further manifested through disgust and cynicism in the institution of bureaucracy.

More recent theorists think that formalization of power could degenerate into formalism and that bureaucratic forms could concentrate power at the top, thus causing an "iron cage" to imprison the low-level worker in obscurity and monotonous detail.

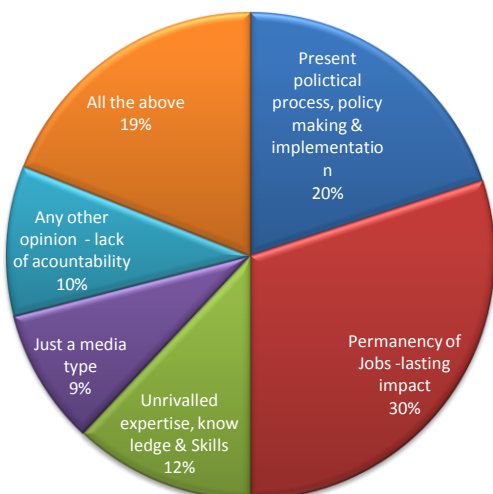


Figure 1. Excessive powers of a bureaucrat.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the study carried out on J&K bureaucracy, certain primary data were collected regarding the excessive powers attributed to bureaucracy, main factors responsible for it, the control system in bureaucracy, the resulting alienation and inaccessibility of bureaucracy, and the associated reasons for it. The findings have been depicted as a source of information to authenticate the perceptions.

### Excessive powers of a bureaucrat

It has been observed that bureaucracy has been conferred with too much power, whether that is based upon law or convention. This excessive power can be attributed to various factors, according to the respondents, portrayed in Figure 1.

About 20/100 (20.00%) of the respondents stated that the power that the bureaucrats have over the present political process, that is, policy making and policy implementation, was responsible for their excessive power and authority. Most of these respondents were the retired bureaucrats. Their experience of more than 25 years had made them realize the influence politicians had over the crucial aspects of governance. According to them, this was mainly due to the strong nexus between the bureaucracy and the politics.

30/100 (30.00%) of the respondents attributed this excessive power to the permanency of jobs in the public governance. These were the junior level bureaucrats, who attributed bureaucratic power to job permanency. They actually belonged to the contemporary world of competition and uncertainty. In spite of this, they had entered a public sector domain of complete permanency and assurance. This assured service span created a

lasting impact. Respondents believed that the permanency of their jobs made the bureaucrats behave like autocrats, who could get away with anything.

12/100 (12.00%) of the bureaucrats were of the opinion that unrivalled expertise, knowledge and skills gave them a feeling of elation. This happened due to the utter lack of competition in the public services and assured timely promotions. The respondents believed that this led to excessive bureaucratic power in the administration. These were the highly qualified junior and middle level bureaucrats. They believed that none could compete with the administrative expertise, knowledge, and skill of a bureaucrat. Being highly qualified, it added to their confidence and power.

9/100 (09.00%) of the respondents waived it off as just media hype. They believed that the reality was far from this and there existed certain constraints over the power that the bureaucrats could actually exert. These were the senior level bureaucrats, who were very apprehensive of being labeled as the excessive power holders. They seemed to be uncomfortable with the idea of excessive power as that insinuated towards a lot of associated evils in administration.

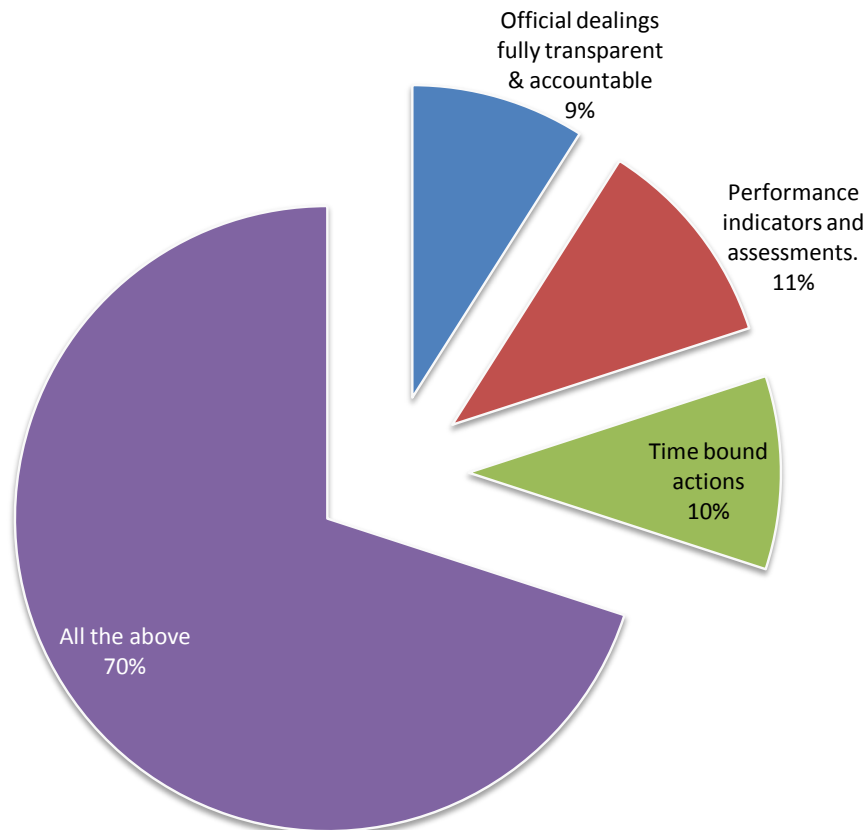
10/100 (10.00%) of the respondents held the lack of accountability responsible for the excessive bureaucratic power. These were the non-state subject bureaucrats, as they were strong proponents of accountability and transparency due to their exposure to the tenets of good governance. They believed that if bureaucrats were not answerable for anything, they could excise undue authority whenever desired.

The remaining 19/100 (19.00%) of the respondents felt that all the given options were equally suitable and all of them put together led to an increase in the bureaucratic power. Most of these respondents were female belonging to the junior or middle level bureaucracy. They attributed the excessive bureaucratic power to almost everything associated with bureaucracy.

### Control system in bureaucracy

Control over the bureaucracy can be established formally as well as informally. An official's conscience is one of the ways of informal control. Formal control is exercised through strict adherence to rules, law and accountability systems.

22/100 (22.00%) of respondents stated that necessarily a strict formal control was needed in bureaucracy all the time. This helps to keep the bureaucracy performance oriented and result-oriented. These were the retired bureaucrats and junior-level bureaucrats. The retired ones had no inhibitions in suggesting a strict formal control system over the bureaucracy as they were now out of the formal bureaucratic system. The junior bureaucrats were very enthusiastic and wanted no stone unturned for the better public governance. These respondents believed that to ensure complete consumer



**Figure 2.** Ways to control public bureaucracy and its associated power.

satisfaction, nothing needed to be left to chance. Hence, a strict formal control system was the need of the hour.

56/100 (56.00%) of the respondents opined that at times bureaucrats should rely on the official's conscience too. These bureaucrats believed that by adhering to informal control systems, officials learn to take up personal responsibilities as trust has been reposed in them and they try their best to keep up to it. In any case, an official's conscience is the ultimate deciding factor in administrative matters. These respondents were the senior level bureaucrats and female bureaucrats from all levels of bureaucracy. Females seemed to be more conscientious than their male counterparts. Therefore, they presumed that a person's conscience acts as the best controlling mechanism. The senior bureaucrats throughout their lifelong experiences had learnt that all said and done, it was ultimately an administrator's conscience that became instrumental for positive results – rules and laws could fail you anytime. They also seemed to have become more God-fearing and religious, towards the fag end of their lives.

Another 22/100 (22.00%) of the respondents were of the view that both formal control systems and healthy conscience should coexist in carrying out the daily administration. Most of these respondents were the

middle level bureaucrats. They preferred to take the middle course and believed that both could simultaneously fetch results. These respondents believed that both were equally important and could not do without each other. Rules and accountability mechanisms were important but at the same time, these would not work too well if not complimented by the conscience.

### **Ways to control public bureaucracy and its associated power**

There is a need to control the bureaucratic power lest it becomes out of bounds. The respondents of this research were asked about the ways of controlling the bureaucracy in a democracy so that it serves the people to the utmost level. All the findings are portrayed in Figure 2.

9/100 (09.00%) of the bureaucrats stated that public bureaucracy could be best controlled by making all the official dealings fully transparent and accountable. These respondents were the junior level bureaucrats having doctorate or master's degree as their qualification. Their enthusiasm at that stage of their career was the reason behind their perception. They also realized that without

transparency and accountability in the official dealings, they could not survive for long. These bureaucrats believed that making all the official work known to the public and open to criticism would eventually help in exercising control over the bureaucracy. This would keep them open for questioning by anybody.

None of the bureaucrats believed that proper practice of "Right to Information Act" by itself could be a way of controlling the public bureaucracy. They believed that much more than just an RTI Act would help in bringing about the needed control over the bureaucracy.

Only 11/100 (11.00%) of the bureaucrats perceived that setting up of performance indicators and assessing their performance would help in controlling the administration. This would automatically ensure that a bureaucrat is not a defaulter as he needs to work against set criteria, which make up the performance indicators. Assessing a bureaucrat's performance against these indicators would eventually lead to an efficient and effective performance, bringing the whole bureaucratic system under control. These respondents were the middle level non-state subject bureaucrats. Some of these belonged to the female gender. Being non-state subjects, they had wider exposures to the latest performance assessment techniques. And being middle level bureaucrats, they had gained the professional confidence and also were already performing well unlike their seniors, who had reached higher positions and thus were thinking of taking sabbaticals.

10/100 (10.00%) of the respondents opined that time bound actions in all dealings would help in controlling the public bureaucracy. They were the senior level, non-state subject bureaucrats. Most of them were females. It has normally been observed that the state subject bureaucrats show poor time management. In fact, females have been perceived to have better time management skills than their male counterparts. It is also very convenient for the senior level bureaucrats to demand time bound actions as they are there to show case the results achieved through the efforts of the sub-ordinates.

The majority of bureaucrats 70/100 (70.00%) stated that all the above mentioned ways put together would be able to bring about a control over the public bureaucracy in the most endurable manner. These were the junior and middle level bureaucrats besides the retired seniors. They were not confident about the efficiency of a single controlling mechanism. Therefore, they opted for all the given mechanisms including proper implementation of RTI Act.

### **Alienation and inaccessibility from state administration**

The public needs to be constantly interacting with the public administrators and kept abreast regarding all the administrative happenings. Otherwise, the feeling of

alienation and inaccessibility created between the two can lead to disastrous results. One of the many initiatives taken to increase the bureaucratic accessibility is in the concept of 'Burgernahe' (closeness to citizens) in Germany. It has become the short hand expression for reducing the geographical, political and administrative distance between the citizens and the authorities [Pierre, 1995]. In the developing countries, there is a consistent effort towards reducing the tensions between the public and the bureaucracy. For this purpose, efforts need to be made for higher bureaucratic autonomy, which shall eventually lead to better service delivery, and hence better relations between the two.

75/100 (75.00%) of the bureaucrats stated that the public did feel alienated from the administration. Most of these were the junior level bureaucrats, with some from the middle level. All the retired bureaucrats were included in this group besides some of the females. Thus, a majority opined that a common man was alienated from the administration. This group of bureaucrats was empathizing with the public and putting forth their perspective objectively.

25/100 (25.00%) of the respondents believed that the common man did not feel alienated from the administration at all. This section of respondents mainly belonged to the service delivery level and hence the perception. They had their own rationale behind the response they gave. These were the senior and middle level, rural bureaucrats. They seemed to be hoodwinking the reality. Public being the most alienated from the senior bureaucrats, ironically this fact was least realized by them.

### **Inaccessibility of bureaucracy**

One of the main preconditions for learning of the administrative techniques and processes by the bureaucrats is the complete consistent interaction between the public and the bureaucracy. Besides, acting as stimuli for the administrative behaviour, the public also provides the base for the feedback mechanism which entails better and improved bureaucratic performance in future. After independence, bureaucrats were gradually viewed as strangers and usurpers. The bureaucracy was accused of apathy to the public cause and unresponsive to the public problems and thus seen as a repulsive entity. Even today, the bureaucracy seems to have isolated itself from the common man and thus is unable to cope with the socio-economic changes and the ever rising aspirations of the people, in the developing nations.

The reasons behind the inaccessibility of the bureaucracy for the common man were asked from 75/100 (75.00%) of the respondents who had opined for the same. They had their own rationale, which is revealed in Table 1.

4/75 (05.33%) of the respondents, who believed that bureaucracy was inaccessible, stated that the reasons behind this were the feelings of awe that the common

**Table 1.** Reasons for inaccessibility of the bureaucracy.

Reasons	Number	Percent
a) Feelings of awe against status attributed to bureaucracy	4	05.33
b) Unapproachable attitude	23	30.66
c) High security surrounding the bureaucrats	14	18.66
d) Lack of humanism & human relations in administration	18	24.00
e) All the above	16	21.33
<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>99.98</b>

people felt due to the high status attributed to bureaucracy. The power and aura surrounding the bureaucrats had given rise to elitism, attributing an unduly high status to this section of the society.

23/75 (30.66%) of the respondents attributed the inaccessibility of bureaucracy to the unapproachable attitude of bureaucrats. These bureaucrats start thinking very highly of themselves and develop an autocratic attitude. These respondents were the junior level bureaucrats of rural origin. They had yet to develop the idiosyncrasies of true bureaucrats and, therefore, felt no inhibition in revealing that a bureaucrat usually exhibits an unapproachable attitude.

14/75 (18.66%) respondents hold the high security surrounding the bureaucrats and security zones that they reside in responsible for their inaccessibility. The precedence of very high security surrounding the officers started during the period of militancy and has continued ever since. This automatically keeps the public at a distance from the bureaucrats. These respondents included junior level bureaucrats of urban origin and some non-state subjects of middle level bureaucracy. Being urban, high security systems had always been irksome. At the same time, non-state subjects were not used to or in favor of those high security scenarios around. The high security surrounding the bureaucrats was exclusively a feature of the J&K State due to the history of past turmoil. This precedence, suiting most of the senior and middle level bureaucrats, was not being given up, even after its need was over.

Lack of humanism and human relations in administration is quoted by 18/75 (24.00%) of the respondents as the reason behind this inaccessibility. The bureaucrats cannot empathize with the public, and show less concern and compassion when required. This creates a distance between the two. Most of these respondents were female bureaucrats. They seemed to have a natural tendency towards humanism and believed in empathizing to the maximum with the public.

The remaining 16/75 (21.33%) of the respondents opted for all the above stated reasons behind the inaccessibility of bureaucracy. They found all the given options equally suitable as the rationale behind their perception. These were the retired senior level bureaucrats besides some female ones. All options seemed equally feasible to them.

Ideally, bureaucracy requires neutrality, but in reality, it is rarely so. Sticking to neutrality would help to break the much talked about bureaucratic-political nexus, leading to a non-partisan bureaucracy. But the fact is that only most efficient bureaucracies can have the privilege of being neutral. J&K bureaucracy, being inefficient to a great extent, cannot afford to be completely neutral. At the same time, too much power has become an inherent part of bureaucracy, which indirectly tends to make it more inefficient. To top it all, lack of accountability and control renders it as a defunct part of the system. The excessive bureaucratic power can mostly be attributed to the permanency of jobs and power that they have over the political process, policy making and its implementation. This implies the misuse of power, at times. Actually, it happens quite often and the common man suffers. Thus, the bureaucratic power needs to be kept in check by efficient control mechanisms. All formal and informal control systems need to be kept in place. But these control mechanisms seem to be too weak in J&K. There seems to be little choice but to rely mostly on the informal control systems like the conscience or empathetic attitude of the bureaucrat. This renders the control mechanism weak, unstable and unreliable.

The recruitment pattern in the government is not fool proof at all. The locals are not given a place in the system for long periods or at lucrative postings, which has led to the alienation of the masses from the government business. Besides the creation of bottlenecks for the people of J&K in joining the administrative services, the menace of reservation policy has emerged. The policy of reservation leaves very little scope for the meritorious Kashmiris to enter the administrative services. This alienates the common masses from the administrative services even further.

Finally, all the factors put together create the vices of nepotism and corruption in Kashmir. All the lucrative positions are filled with people motivated by selfish gains. Thus corruption flourishes. Due to nepotism, all the efficient and honest officers are side-lined with no value for merit and talent.

There needs to be a control on the bureaucracy so that it serves the public in the best possible manner. The bureaucratic power has to be held in check through various formal and informal control systems. The best ways of controlling the bureaucracy were found to be the

setting up of performance indicators to assess the performance of the bureaucrats, aiming at time bound actions, making the official dealings fully transparent and accountable, and proper implementation of the RTI Act, and other laws.

It was found that the best control system that could be adopted in bureaucracy was the internal individual control system, i.e., reliance on the conscience of an officer. Although a strict formal control system was also needed to keep the bureaucratic power under check, ultimately everything trickled down to an individuals' conscience. The formal control system constitutes the internal controls (inside the bureaucracy) and external controls (surrounding environment and organisations).

All public servants need to create a sense of 'self-responsibility' that makes them morally obligated, even if they may not be legally or officially obliged. Therefore, selecting the right kind of personnel for the bureaucracy at the outset is very imperative as their value-system would naturally be inclined towards public interest.

### **Nomenclature transition of bureaucracy**

The nomenclature transition from the 'government servant' to the 'public servant' actually signifies a transition in a bureaucrat's duties and responsibilities. The junior and middle level bureaucrats from the rural origin signified their conservative attitude by stating this. This also pointed out towards their sensitive nature. A lot of bureaucrats have readily accepted the transition of nomenclature, and consequently realised their changed duties and responsibilities. To some extent it also signifies that public is more important and significant than the government. Ultimately, the transition in the nomenclature enhances the importance of the public. It implies that the government is subservient to the public. The transition, therefore, needs to be adhered to very strictly so that it brings home the right message. This transition has been, to a great extent, instrumental in changing and improving the mindsets of the bureaucrats and making them realise that they are there to serve the public.

Bureaucracy involves a lot of power attributed to the permanency of jobs, which creates a lasting impact. It is also attributed to the power over the present political process, policy making and implementation. Excessive power associated with bureaucracy is due to a combination of other factors like unrivalled expertise, knowledge and skills that the bureaucrats have, and also the lack of accountability they face, besides the above given factors. The permanency of jobs is a real power yielder as it provides a kind of security to the official, which helps develop an autocratic mind-set.

On the other hand, it does not seem that an unrivalled expertise, knowledge or skill can be attributed to bureaucrats. They are simply generalists that do not possess any of the characteristics of a technocrat or professional.

They do not even seem to have much power over the present political process, policy making and implementation, as there is too much of politicization of bureaucracy seen these days and the political executive seems to possess greater power (due or undue) than a bureaucrat. It could, quite possibly, be just media hype or a false image created in the society by some interest groups. Bureaucracy needs to demolish the high walls of elitism and acts as part of the public by shunning the unnecessary extra security surrounding them and the false aura created by them.

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Bureaucrats in J&K have come to be seen as the authority figures and, at the same time, belonging to the most elite class. Associating bureaucracy with elitism is mainly responsible for the dysfunctional characteristics being developed by J&K bureaucracy. Normally, a common man is made to wait for long hours before he can meet a civil servant. Then finally when he gets the chance, he is made to feel like an intruder in the domain of the official, by his attitude of snobbery and indifference. It has been seen that the prerequisite for any drastic or dramatic improvement in the quality of the performance of the bureaucracy, is a greater degree of assertiveness of the public opinion and the greater awareness on the part of the general public.

Although bureaucracy plays a constructive role too by providing consistency, accountability, order and stability, at the same time, due to excessive bureaucracy, its constructive role gets undermined most of the times. Bureaucracy is a phenomenon through which the bureaucrats abuse the power that they enjoy due to their position in the administration. This makes the bureaucracy dysfunctional and stifles the role of the administration. Due to its excessive powers, bureaucracy tries to over-power and over-tower the society eventually, thus hampering the developmental processes. A genuine and efficient leadership over bureaucracy would really help.

Control mechanisms need to be created internally as well as externally. It needs to be realized that no control mechanism can function successfully on its own. All mechanisms have to work simultaneously in coordination with each other so that the power and authority of bureaucracy is contained, and beneficial results are assured for the public. The legislature, judiciary, and media should act as control agents or watch dogs of the bureaucratic action. But, this is only possible when these agents are themselves corruption-free and righteous. At the same time, a mechanism of 'popular control' is very much needed. The results of the bureaucratic processes need to be valued by the public so that the bureaucratic power is legitimized. An effort needs to be made to keep all the sessions of legislature and bureaucracy open to the public. This can be done under the provisions of

'sunshine laws', where the passage of such laws lets in the 'light of day'. When decisions are made in open meetings, it automatically implements a control mechanism over the bureaucracy. Increase of the citizen participation would act as an important control mechanism. The public would themselves determine the administrative orientation and strategy, and see to its effective implementation. Creating an 'ombudsman' in every office would make the administration accountable. Being neutral by nature, an ombudsman would be responsible for taking and addressing the complaints of the citizens. As an internal informal control mechanism, the officials, in their own individual capacity, need to create a sense of responsibility and accountability for all their actions. This is expected from the conscientious officers. All these things put together would keep the bureaucracy under control, and check the misuse of their power and authority.

The most important power base of bureaucracy—the law and the constitution—creates a 'magic shield' for the bureaucrats, which empowers and protects them. But, as has started to happen in J&K, if they stray away from the legal commands and start misusing their power, this 'magic shield' disappears. This makes them more accountable and responsible.

The transition in the nomenclature of bureaucracy from "Government Service" to "Public Service" has been, to a great extent, instrumental in changing and improving the mindsets of the bureaucrats and making them realise that they are there to serve the public.

There has to be a trend towards 'popular control' which is no doubt very difficult to achieve. It has two interpretations. First is the ability of the people to make its preferences known to the bureaucracy and to have the bureaucracy make decisions consistent with those expressed preferences. Second is the ability of the citizens to obtain redress of grievances for certain administrative actions that violate the rights of individuals.

Fortunately, with the use of information technology and the spread of mass education and mass media, the role and functioning of bureaucrats and public servants is coming under effective public scrutiny. People are getting more exposed to the merits and attitudes and actions of the bureaucrats. Bureaucracy needs to show empathy towards the problems of the citizens and reduce the menace of red tapism.

In order to increase the points of contact between bureaucracy and the public, the concept of "seamless governments" has come into existence<sup>[11]</sup>. Seamless organizations provide a smooth, transparent, almost effortless experience for their customers. The staff stays in direct contact with their end users while performing their job. Seamless governments provide the seam less service i.e. any time, any place, through e-governance technology, using sophisticated software. This provides the administrators with too many new and imaginative ways to do the public's business. Thus, efforts are consistently on for increasing the bureaucratic accessibility

the world over.

The public bureaucrats cannot undermine their duties, especially when it comes to the utilization of different resources allocated to them, including their time. Their power recedes if they are unable to utilize all these judiciously. Here, they may have to face certain vulnerabilities, which render their tasks difficult or unattainable. It may undeniably lead to an eventual end of the bureaucratic power or death of bureaucracy. It is, therefore, pertinent that all efforts are made to keep the bureaucracy under check. The replacement of the bureaucratic institution by an alternate institution, which is people-friendly, result-oriented, accessible, dynamic, and humanistic, may not be a far-fetched possibility. Bureaucracy with its power-packed structure may not persist for long. Hence, a complete transformation is required.

It was found that the best control system that could be adopted in bureaucracy was the reliance on the conscience of an officer. Although a strict formal control system was also needed, to keep the bureaucratic power under check, ultimately everything trickled down to an individuals' conscience, at the end. The formal control system constitutes the internal controls (inside the bureaucracy) and the external controls (external to the bureaucracy- the surrounding environment and organisations).

But the most important control system is the internal individual control system i.e. the conscience of an individual. Every public servant needs to create a sense of 'self responsibility' which makes him morally obligated, even if he may not be legally or officially obligated. Therefore, selecting the right kind of personnel for the bureaucracy at the outset, is very imperative, as their value-system would naturally be inclined towards public interest.

In order to persist and retain its powers, bureaucracy in J&K needs to adopt major changes and improvements, vis-à-vis its attitude, functioning patterns, exercise of powers and goal orientation. A sense of belongingness and responsibility towards the public is going to pave the way for better public administration and hence, enhance the institution of bureaucracy.

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Full Length Research Paper

# Hyperheterosexualization and hypermasculinity: Challenges for HIV/AIDS intervention in the Caribbean Trinidad and Tobago

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**This work aims to understand how ones' understanding of Caribbean manhood, hyperheterosexualization, masculinity, and gender shape or impact HIV/AIDS education and one's understanding of self and feelings. Further, given the colonial and religious nature of Trinidad and Tobago, the study wants to untangle the multilayered complex historical, social and political cannons through which identification/gay profiling, prejudice; homophobia, dominant masculinity, and power are produced, performed and understood. This work is a continued extension of the author's previously published book titled *Buller Men and Batty Bwoys: Hidden Men in Toronto and Halifax Black Communities* [2004].**

**Key words:** HIV/AIDS, colonial and religious nature, Trinidad and Tobago.

## INTRODUCTION

*I'm 19 years old and I never thought of HIV/AIDS. It was just some letters that I saw as a white man thing. Before I found out I had HIV/AIDS, I always feel I could not get it because they say it's a gay white man's disease. I don't fit in that category. How in the hell I get this thing? (Interview respondent)*

At the end of 2007, an estimated 230,000 people in the Caribbean were living with HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS Report, 2008). In three of the seven countries in the region—the Bahamas, Haiti, and Trinidad and Tobago—more than 4% of the adult population was living with HIV/AIDS.<sup>1</sup> That

same year, the disease claimed an estimated 24,000 lives, making it the leading cause of death in the Caribbean among adults aged 15 to 44. Higher prevalence rates are found only in sub-Saharan Africa, making the Caribbean the second most affected region in the world (AVERT, 2009). In a report released by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, they estimate the number of people living with HIV has slightly increased from 33.3 million to just over 34 million (2011). Now the world has reached a crossroads, "writes the U.N. secretary-general in the preface to AIDS at 30, a reference to the fact that the epidemic first surfaced in 1981."

The number of people becoming infected and dying is decreasing, but the international resources needed to sustain this progress have declined for the first time in 10 years, despite tremendous unmet needs (UNAIDS Report, 2011). HIV/AIDS education delivered by the state and health care officials in the Caribbean has tended to focus on bringing down mortality rates by strengthening

<sup>1</sup> In the year 2004 in Trinidad & Tobago, an average of four new cases of HIV/AIDS were reported every day. The predominant mode of HIV transmission is heterosexual, with a male to female ratio of 55:45 and with more females than males in cases reported in the 15–34 age group. 'Multiple sexual partners' is cited as the most frequent risk factor for HIV infection. The median age of reported HIV positive cases is 35 in males and 29 in females, with more than 85% of all reported AIDS cases occurring among people aged 20–59 (United Nations Programme on HIV, 2008).

treatment and delivery programs. Other approaches by religious organizations (Muslims, Hindus, Shouter Baptist, Jehovah Witness, Seven-day-Adventist and other Christian Denominations) and conservatives have stressed sexual abstinence or sex after marriage. Government advertising and posters have also been very heteronormative and conservative in their approach, increasing the ostracism, moral panic, discrimination and stigma faced by men with fluid sexual identities, those sexually abused (incest and rape) injection drug users, sex workers, and MSM reinforcing the legacy of taboo, disorder, decay, and scorn in the minds of many in the Caribbean toward these communities. Homosexuals may be accepted today in some pockets in the Caribbean in a general sense, but “out or publicly known” homosexuals are not as easily accepted. There exists in some Caribbean Islands, Trinidad and Barbados in particular, an interesting form of communal village or societal acceptance and accommodation for LGBTQ life, effeminate gay men and drag queens. LGBTQ groups, human rights activists and drag queens are to be credited for taking the risk, while working against homophobia within these communal and village forms of acceptance. Despite these small gains of communal accommodation LGBTQ resistance, powerful religious and conservative values mute efforts to reach vulnerable populations on the margins of acceptability, including sexually active males MSM<sup>2</sup> and SAM<sup>3</sup>. As Stall et al. (2008) remind us “young men’s development is influenced by many contextual factors, including socioeconomics, race/ethnicity, and familial variables. However, sociocultural pressures, including the pressure to meet socially valued masculinity norms (not the least of which includes heterosexuality) also affect the development and behavioral patterns of MSM and SAM. Masculine Socialization stress results from the ‘shaming and other punishment of gay males for failing to achieve masculine ideals’... (Stall et al., 2008).

The Caribbean Epidemiology Centre (CAREC) informs us that infection rates among men who have sex with men are between 6 and 66% (December, 2006). Further, in one Trinidad and Tobago daily newspaper, the Trinidad Express, reports from “a six-year (2004-2011) comparative study on HIV/AIDS in the elderly in Trinidad and

Tobago by the Medical Research Centre and Foundation, of 4,566 ‘new’ patients who were enrolled for the first time in the clinic before ever receiving treatment; as many as 1,216 (26 per cent) of the patients were 50 years and over (588 males and 628 females) and 128 (2.7 per cent) were 65 years and over (70 males and 58 females), as compared to 14-15 per cent in the 50 age group and over and 1.5 per cent in those 65 and over in the US studies.” (16/02/2012). These statistics cause us to ask why we are seeing such a high increase among MSM populations.

As Treichler et al. (1999) have argued, AIDS is an “epidemic of signification” that allows us to think about flows of information and the fluidity of categories, racial, national, gender, sexual and particularly with respect to research and policy decisions. Because sexuality and gender intersect with race and nation, research on HIV risk requires us to unpack multiple signifiers simultaneously. In other words, labels such as “men who have sex with men MSM & SAM offer us an array of opportunities to identify vulnerable populations and to question social positions with respect to risk. It is observed over the years how HIV/AIDS is deployed to define and stigmatize communal categories. How can we reduce the mortality rate and transmission of HIV other than through the delivery of prevention/treatment programs that are limited due to stigma, discrimination and ostracism, particularly for MSM?

In this paper, it is argued that educational interventions by government and AIDS workers are blocked by the discourses of hyperheterosexualization and forced performances of stylized and signifying performances of a dominant or hypermasculine behavior that lead men who have sex with men to believe that AIDS is not a problem for them. Further, structural inequalities such as the lack of LGBTQ rights, abject poverty in some situations, and HIV/AIDS illiteracy create additional obstacles. Better intervention strategies are needed not only to reduce the spread of HIV, but also to empower the many gay men who feel powerless and hopeless because they have no recourse to a rights-based agenda (Carr and Lewis, 2007). This paper contributes to the debate on the intersection of HIV and gender-driven roles, money for sex, sexual fantasy, sexual desire, and power in MSM relationships. Beginning with a discussion of the history of HIV/AIDS education in Trinidad and Tobago, this paper is organized in the following manner. Four important themes are discussed in this paper;

- 1) How do feelings of self-worth, manhood, and the fragility of masculinity shape gay men's and MSM ability to negotiate safe sexual practices and relationships?
- 2) How has the colonial and religious nature of Trinidad and Tobago influenced homophobia, sexual taboos, and the profiling of gay men?
- 3) How do hyperheterosexualization and hypermasculinity impact HIV/AIDS education among young and adult gay men?

<sup>2</sup> Many Caribbean Christian organizations and religious individuals see AIDS as God’s punishment of homosexuals for sexual misdemeanors and crimes that go against God’s will of Adam & Eve.

<sup>3</sup> While I accept the concept and or terminology MSM and understand it’s intention – I would like to add that MSM shortfalls to account for sexually active males (SAM) that is men have sex with both genders or anyone: simply because they enjoy the sensation, are sex workers, might be questioning their sexual orientation, enjoys the excitement of **not** been caught, impact of sexual abuse and sexual violence: reliving their trauma (vivid memories, phantasm, or acting them out and transforming **them in** victory). This is a challenge for HIV/AIDS education to include in their educational narrative, tools and outreach an analysis that accounts for SAM, who are not talked about in HIV/AIDS education as much as MSM.

4) How does immigration, migration and ongoing interactions to Canada and North America set in motion a process of recognition, and evaluation premised with a growing awareness of racialized men displacement and one's understating of risk associated HIV behaviors?

### **Brief history of HIV/AIDS education in the Caribbean**

Initially HIV/AIDS was a taboo subject and attributed to white gay males and homosexuals. Many in the Caribbean were afraid to be tested for fear of stigma, discrimination, guilt, shame, and the negative social connotations associated with being HIV positive. To that end, groups of gay and lesbian activists in the Caribbean, in conjunction with their counterparts in North America, started to engage in local community AIDS education initiatives despite great community and public resistance. As a public health nurse in this study commented, this was when the slogan "don't be afraid, be aware" was born. In a clandestine manner, people sought testing from the few health centers that were set up by the government. The problem, however, with early testing in the Caribbean and elsewhere was the length of time needed for getting results back, usually four to six weeks. This waiting period created anxiety and hesitancy for those who wanted to modify their behavior immediately and seek treatment.

In 1991, Ervin announced that he had tested positive for HIV and would be retiring from professional basketball. Entertainers in Trinidad and Tobago and globally were used to promote and send messages in their music to enlighten people about the seriousness of HIV. Posters and banners were posted all over the Caribbean and in Trinidad encouraging people to know their status and get tested. As one of the public health nurses in this study reported, a pilot study was done in 1998 in Tobago on pregnant women and mother-to-child transmission. The following year the program was up-scaled to a national level and all pregnant women were encouraged to be tested. Testing sites all over Trinidad and Tobago now offer pre- and post-test counseling, and results are obtained within half an hour. Services such as Voluntary Counseling and Testing (VCT) and Provider Initiated Testing and Counseling (PITC) were set up to facilitate testing. In addition, a group of young adults under the name RAPPORT were used to spread the message to young people in a way they could relate to. Students were given HIV/AIDS education at school via an interactive feed/back teach/back system. More persons from all walks of life were trained and encouraged to spread the message through group discussion and information booklets. Traditionally HIV/AIDS education in the Caribbean has focused on strengthening treatment and delivery programs to bring down the mortality rates. Other approaches by religious organizations and conservatives have stressed sexual abstinence, or sex after marriage.

Government advertising and posters have also been very heteronormative and conservative in their approaches, reinforcing or increasing the ostracism, alienation, discrimination and stigma faced by injection users, sex workers and men who have sex with men (MSM).

These approaches reinforce the ignorance faced by many that AIDS is a gay white man's disease, sex workers problem and men who have sex with men as homosexuality carries a very heavy legacy of taboo, disorder, decay, and scorn in the minds of many in the Caribbean. Homosexuals may be accepted today in a general sense, but "out or publicly know" homosexuals are not in the Caribbean. Given that many in the Caribbean still see AIDS as a gay white male disease or plague, by extension gay Caribbean male disease. Governments advertising and education targeting (MSM) populations on television or public posters will only create a moral panic and increase the violence and discrimination faced by MSM and gay men. To this end, Caribbean governments have been muted by powerful religious and conservative values on reaching vulnerable populations including (MSM) persons who remain on the margins of acceptability. The religious and Christian values that embrace sex as intimately between men and women and sex as for the purposes of reproduction, is still alive as the "norm" for many in the World. Due in part to the conservative religious and Judeo-Christian values, patriarchy emerges, threatening "normative masculinity" gendering AIDS education interventions, while the rate of infections continues to increase among (MSM) populations. The Caribbean Epidemiology Centre (CAREC) informs us that infection rates among (MSM) are between six (6) and sixty-six (66) percent [December 2006]. These statistical facts raise the question why are we seeing such a high increase among (MSM) populations. As Paula et al. (1999) have said, AIDS is an "epidemic of signification," because it allows us to think about flows of information and the fluidity of categories, racial, national, gender, sexual and particularly with respect to research and policy decisions. Sexuality and gender intersect with the categories of race and nation, such that research on HIV risk requires us to unpack all the above terms. In other words, labels such as "men who have sex with men [MSM]," like the labels "men," offer us an array of opportunities for identifying vulnerable populations allowing us to question social positions with respect to risk. To this end, this study focuses on MSM and SAM in Trinidad and Tobago, framed within the context of hyperheterosexualization and hypermasculinity as a means to an end. As a gay out identified Trinidadian living in Canada, it is observed over the years how HIV/AIDS is deployed to define and stigmatize communal categories. How can we reduce the mortality rate and transmission of HIV other than through the delivery of prevention/treatment programs which have limitations due to stigma and ostracism in particular for (MSM)? The forced gender performances of hyperheterosexualization

and hypermasculinity, as survival means blocks successful interventions by government and AIDS workers to curb the transmission of HIV/AIDS and educate (MSM) populations, because they see themselves as outside the “normative frames of heterosexualization. Discourses of hyperheterosexuality lead MSM to believe that AIDS is not a problem for them. Further, structural inequalities such as the lack of LGBTQ rights, abject poverty in some situations, and HIV/AIDS illiteracy must be targeted. Carr and Lewis [2007] also point out that most governments fail to address structural vulnerability, because they are concerned about been reelected if they go against deeply religious and conservative views of the electorate and the culture of hegemonic heterosexuality and purity. This study contributes to the debate around the intersection of gender-driven roles and HIV, money for sex, sexual fantasy, sexual desire, power, and HIV in same-sex (MSM) sexual relationships, which are complicate to study and very few empirical studies have been done on this subject.

### **Hyperheterosexualization and hypermasculinity**

For most young men in the Caribbean, the success and strength of their manhood to a large degree depends on how well they can perform 'normative, straightjacket or dominant masculinity' to obfuscate any form of tenderness or effeminacy'. Their hypermasculinity is an apparatus or sum total of collective surveillance and regulation of what is supposed to be male, masculine and not effeminate. To that end, most men police and deny expressions of tenderness in order to perform, instead, a certain cheerful obsequiousness, hypermasculinity and, by extension, hyperheterosexualization. As Connell (1987, 1995, 2005) argues, dominant forms of hegemonic masculinity reside alongside less powerful, subordinated forms of masculinity (e.g., of sexual minorities, disabled men) and marginalized or discriminated forms of masculinity (e.g., of racialized minorities, working class men, under-employed men, and low income men).

The subordinated position of working class masculinities by comparison to their middle class financially secure brothers makes their masculinities seem very fragile. To prevent this, working class men engage in roles and performances that police soft masculinity by acting macho. Morgan (in Crichlow, 2004) comments that "our fights usually indicated an overt disdain for anything that might appear soft or wet—more a taboo on tenderness than a celebration of violence" (Crichlow, 2004 quoting Morgan). Hypermasculinity and hyperheterosexualization, or acting “macho” within Caribbean and among working class men and boys affirms one's allegiance to the policing of a soft masculinity. The dominant culture demands physical responses from boys and makes toughness the hallmark of the real male. As Bailey et al. (2002) observe, young boys knew that if they performed outside the expected, traditional roles they

would be ridiculed and labeled 'sissy'. Some Black gay working class men in the Caribbean, in particular those who reject soft forms of masculinities and in some cases education as upward mobility, embrace instead fighting, fucking and flirting, which is a source of the crisis for some HIV interventions, making it gendered and risky. Barrow (1998) argues that the contemporary social-gender system that operates in the Caribbean was built on an "insecure and ambivalent" foundation. This ambivalence, along with the tropes and strictures of Black working class and gay masculinities, is played out in the risk some men take with unprotected sex, making their masculinity fragile at times.

Many of the seeds of this foundation are planted in childhood and adolescence by parents and communal pressure. According to Bailey et al. (1998), having multiple sexual partners earns respect both in the heterosexual and MSM worlds in the Caribbean. The term 'one burner' applied to a faithful male in some Jamaican and Caribbean communities is a phrase of derision (p. 66). Those who did not have many women were regarded as "sick," suspected of "being bullers," or not being "average young black males" (Crichlow, 2004). For many men, the enduring consequences of these lessons militate against their playing a positive role in the fight against AIDS and expose them and those they have sex with to a greater risk of HIV infection through non-negotiation.

In the next sections, the author takes up questions of hypersexualization and hypermasculinity in his work on HIV and risk among MSM, in Trinidad and Tobago; ethnographic study on men who have sex with men in Trinidad and Tobago. The study also draws on subsequent meetings in 2011 with medical and academic practitioners in the field, and explores three main questions:

- 1) How do feelings of self-worth, manhood, and the fragility of masculinity shape gay men's and MSM ability to negotiate safe sex practices and relationships?
- 2) How has the colonial and religious nature of Trinidad and Tobago influenced homophobia, sexual taboos, and the profiling of gay men?
- 3) How do hyperheterosexualization and hypermasculinity impact HIV/AIDS education among young and adult gay men?

### **RESEARCH CONTEXT AND METHODOLOGY**

The lacuna of academic literature in the Caribbean on HIV, gay men, and MSM motivated this study. The author wanted to interrogate hyperheterosexualization and hypermasculinity as socializing agents for young men in and from the Caribbean, and understand their experiences of HIV education, prevention and criminalization or gay criminology. He used the interpretative frameworks of McKee and O'Brian (1982) and Oliffe and Mroz (2005) to invite men to talk about their private and personal experiences.

The study involved 46 participants from different parts of Trinidad

and Tobago, and from different race, class, ethnic, religious, educational and occupational backgrounds. The participants included MSM ranging in age from 18 to 60, nurses and doctors, AIDS educators/workers, author's family members, and professors from the University of the West Indies.

Some of the participants identified as "men who like to have sex with men" but did not consider themselves "gay." Some identified as "bullers"—the term in Trinidad and Tobago for men who have sex with men. Others identified as "gay," and some said there was "no need to use a label." Three of the men were homeless or living in shelters. Ten identified as living with HIV/AIDS, but did not say where they were living or with whom. Four of the men lived alone and were skilled professionals. Three were living in shared accommodation with friends. Ten were students attending college or university.

In addition, the author interviewed eight couples. Two of the couples were living together in intimate relationships and the other six couples were living separately with their parents and families. The remaining participants were health care workers from public health community clinics, and family members, bringing the total for the study to 46 participants.

### Data collection

Data were collected through a mixed-method qualitative approach that included formal and informal in-depth interviews, daily ethnographic observation of social events including the 2007 and 2011 Trinidad and Tobago Carnival celebration, two semistructured meetings with a local gay men's discussion group, and local newspaper media analysis.

As same-sex sexual practices are still illegal in Trinidad and Tobago, meeting research participants and finding private spaces for interviews required care. The Sexual Offences Act of 1986 makes sex between two men punishable by 5–10 years imprisonment. In essence the state of Trinidad and Tobago represents itself as heterosexual and legally promotes heterosexuality. As a result, some of the interviews took place in public parks while others took place in the private backyards and homes of key informants who provided a space for men to meet socially. Some were conducted at the author's home; others happened at social events and clubs. The author had to enter these interviews on the terms and in the spaces of comfort determined by the participants.

The interviews were recorded and transcribed. As the participants used different forms of local Trinidadian dialect, it was important that the transcriptions were accurate. A continuous exchange of data evolved over the course of the study with some of the participants who agreed to assist with language interpretation and wanted to be sure they were not misrepresented.

### Researcher position—reaching out

As Garfinkel (1957) points out, estrangement is helpful for bringing into view the background expectations of participants (p. 37). This was an important methodological intervention as it gave the author the ability to understand the men, make them feel at ease, and gain their support and confidence. To paraphrase Freund (1990), emotional work can be taxing, stressful and painful for all involved and is connected to the issues at hand. As an outsider/researcher, a healthy outlook and attentive listening one with care and empathy was embraced and performed as the author listened to the men with care and empathy. Simmel (1950) makes it clear that the native/stranger role carries with it a certain objectivity that does not commit the researcher to "the unique ingredients and peculiar tendencies of the group" (p. 405). This combination of estrangement, memory, and objectivity were the author's experience

with many of the meeting places and interviews, doing ethnographic observations, and understanding the different forms of language used by the participants.

Hooks (1990) refers to the politicization of memory as a practice of remembering that serves to illuminate and transform the present (p.147). In so doing, she distinguishes it from nostalgia—the longing for something as it used to be. Indeed, the author went through different degrees of culture shock while trying to understand how gay men understood their relationships or adapted to living as gay men in Trinidad and Tobago. He also had some limitations in understanding, as Louis Wirth (1964) explains, "the more complex nuances and saliency of class, race, mixed race, and colourism shape and impact sexual discussions, taken-for-granted issues, and unexplained stories and life experiences" (p. 60-83). Wirth argues that the most important thing to understand about a group or society is what it takes for granted. Indeed, the author Canadian tourist gaze made him take nothing for granted about gay life, gay men, Trinidadian and Tobagonian culture and the deeply evangelical religious and superstitious nature of Caribbean society and people in general.

Doing field research for the study also heightened his awareness and understanding of marginalization, discrimination, bias and taboos. The homophobic culture of Trinidad meant negotiating, as it did for the participants as well, which parts of my identity to make public, which parts to keep private, and which acts of masculinity or hypermasculinity to perform in order to erase effeminate behavior. Identity as performance is theorized by Goffman (1959) who argues that in face-to-face interactions, people use a "front stage performance" including clothing, sex, age, racial characteristics, size, posture, speech patterns, facial expressions, and bodily gestures (p. 24). The work of feminist film critics on the male gaze (Mulvey, 1990) was also very applicable to this negotiation of identity and to observing others who 'might be gay.' It assisted the author especially in public spaces and in meeting with participants. Some participants, for example, warned him not to wear bright colours when going out with them so that they would not be gazed at or perceived by hyperheterosexual men as gay.

As a researcher, the author benefitted greatly from being able to interview men conversationally in Trinidadian dialect, slang, and formal and standard English. Without knowing, understanding, and feeling the cultural nuances of the participants in our research, we risk misrepresenting, permanently damaging, and pathologizing minoritized communities. If we are to be more methodologically sound, reflexive, and theoretically sophisticated in doing qualitative research, the gaze of the stranger researcher has to be interrogated more deeply and complexly. Finally, and most important in doing this work in a hypermasculine, heteronormative and violently homophobic culture was the trajectory of potential problems with police, communal homophobic attacks against the author and study participants, and his family's concerns. To that end, it was a matter of safety, privacy and ethics. The four ethical principles and work of Beauchamp and Childress (1989)—respect for autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice—guided this research work. The participants' names as well as other identifying details have been removed to ensure confidentiality and anonymity.

## FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

This section is divided into three parts. Part one analyzes the men's negotiation of self-worth and the common struggles and vulnerability some of them face in forming relationships. Part two interrogates the perpetuation of colonialism and the sexualization of racism. Part three demonstrates the relationship between hyperhetero-

sexualization, hypermasculinity and gay profiling.

### Negotiating self-worth and relationships

There is a great deal of sadness, unhappiness and constructed hopelessness in the lives of many of the MSM interviewed. These conditions affected how they negotiate relationships, who they have sex with, and the degree to which they are comfortable in finding a language of negotiation and sense of self-worth in both sexual encounters and relationships.

The first interview took place with a group of 15 young men from the Chat Room, a discussion group that met weekly at a private residence. The first issue raised by one of the men in the group was the meaning of gay relationships. As the discussion got started a number of the participants commented, "What relationship?" When asked what they meant, a young man explained:

It is more about what I can give you or, better yet, what you could give me, and who you can catch at the club. You know, the tourists, they have lots of money and they spend it wild on drinks. It's not about love, but money and a fast life. It's fast romance.

Another participant said, "Look, we gay people who bulling, we know that we have no human and legal rights, so why bother about having a meaningful relationship when it means nothing in society?" Their insights quickly reminded the author of the materialist nature of Trinidadian culture and the sense of hopelessness that some men express and feel. It was best summed up by a young man in the group:

*I am young, my body is my gift to older men who have the money. Not the young boys—they have nothing, they're unemployed and still living at home. I want a man who has a good job, a car, a big house and a place for me to go to. I want to be able to have sex with him and have a good time.*

In these conditions, HIV/AIDS education is muzzled by poverty and who feeds you. When power is vested in an older person with money, it also jeopardizes the possibility of negotiating safe/r sexual practices.

### The perpetuation of colonialism

The tropes and legacy of colonialism still dominate the minds and thinking of many white Westerners on racialized peoples. It is therefore important to examine its effects on the construction of and interaction between different kinds of interracial sexual and relationship encounters both globally and locally. The permutations and racist sexual stereotypes are endless, whether examining the effects of white domination and white power in the Caribbean or in North America. One commonly held

power white stereotype is the attribution of inferiority and sexual decadence. This sexual profligacy equates blacks with sexual energy and hypersexuality—what is termed the sexualization of racism. This is best summed up by Baldwin (1972) who writes "no name in the street" in describing his unbelieving shock when he visited the American southern states. It is absolutely certain that white men, who invented the "N" big black prick, are still at the mercy of this nightmare and are still, for the most part, doomed in one way or another to attempt to make this prick their own (p. 482). This sexual phobia, when acted upon, is done with whites feeling pitiful while blacks and racialized peoples suffer the consequence, especially around effective HIV prevention strategies. Inevitably, these racist fears and images are internalized by racialized peoples themselves and acted out unconsciously because they are legitimized by whites. This was the main message of Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967), namely that racialized men who have sex with white men act out sensuous sexual imagining.

### The sexualization of race

A number of men in the discussion group and in the study as a whole felt that tourists were the best men to meet. As one young man said:

*I go to the club to look for and meet tourists only so that I can get American or other foreign currency. The tourist will pay for anything and buy me anything. I don't have to worry about a place to have sex, something to eat, and money. I stay in their hotels, if they are in one, or see them regularly when they want to have sex with me, and I am cool with that. A gay relationship for me is about sex and money, not love and commitment. I'll do anything for money, and the same thing with the tourists—they do anything for sex. It is all about sex, good looks, and money.*

It would appear that the colonized or, in this case, the gay men who seek out mainly white tourists for American dollars, are living out the self-fulfilling prophecy of the sexualization of racism and the black stud/jock/Mandingo image, all dick and no brain. By "Mandingo", the author refers to the film by the same name (1975) in which director Dino De Laurentis portrays sex acts between masters and slaves as intensely paradoxical sites of pleasure and racism. Similar to the fantasy that white tourists are looking for love, the racist Mandingo fantasy is constructed as a romantic encounter that, according to Caribbean men, local men are not capable of giving. By contrast, as Philips (1999) argues in her work on Barbados, men who receive money from female tourists are "able to harness the racial image of Afro-Caribbean men as studs in order to realign their subordination to

white heterosexual masculinities" (p. 45).

The predicament of racism is a matter of philosophical, psychological and institutional contamination, and must be addressed at its core. Rousseau and Porter (1990) argue that the invention of the exotic and the labeling of the anthropological "other" as exotic legitimated treating the peoples of the "developing world/third world" both as a projection of Western fantasies and as fit to be despised, destroyed, or doomed to extinction (p. 7). In essence, the colonizer view of non-whites deployed within the coded language of sun, sex, tourism ignores white racist practices in the name of civilizing men who have sex with men in the Caribbean. The construction of Caribbean MSM as primitive by those who extol the virtues of the sexual freedom and liberation of developing countries relies on the belief that these men do not know better or do not value their lives. By extension, the non-negotiation of safer sexual practices is almost seen as taboo or forbidden if they are racialized men.

### Sex tourism

Some of the men in the study felt that allowing the sex tourism industry to flourish was the government's way of addressing the abject poverty and high unemployment in Trinidad and Tobago. There are ways in which sex acts trespass the intimate boundaries of the racial and legal divide between colonizer and colonized, affirming a new humanity and sexual desire along the lines of economic exchange. Puar, in *Circuits of queer mobility: Tourism, travel, and globalization* (2002), explains the link between colonialism and sex tourism as follows:

*A politically charged, religiously driven, and culturally defined homophobia does not, after all, deflect the lure of an exotic (queer) paradise; instead, it encourages a continuity of colonial constructions of tourism as travel adventure into uncharted territory laden with the possibility of taboo sexual encounters, illicit seductions, and dangerous liaisons—a version of what Renato Rosaldo terms 'imperial nostalgia' (p. 113).*

Tourism, white or otherwise, in places where there is a lack of human and civil gay rights, and where there are people living in abject poverty, large communities of illiteracy, and in areas still in need of development create a ripe environment for exploitive, abusive sexual excitement and the spread of HIV/AIDS. The Caribbean and other sun, sex vacation resorts are places where tourists tend to adventure, wanting to take part in risky unprotected sex and illegal acts with the wild, uncivilized, child-like native. This practice only serves to reinforce developing nations as 'safari cave like' and in need of white or foreign salvation.

Such relationships and encounters complicate how we understand racialized sexuality and the sexualization of racism. Tourist sexual encounters with local natives

challenge the site of the sex act and paradoxically create an antagonism between freedom and domination. However, most local gay men are oblivious of the sexualization of racism, while internalizing some aspects of the dominant definitions of dependency and constructed sexual powerlessness. Given that most white tourists come from racist societies where they are often afraid to engage in publicly displayed interracial relationships, they fulfill their repressed sexual fantasies through temporary vacations and relationships that are easily left behind and forgotten as they show their passports to customs officers on their way out. In addition, as Kincaid (1988) observes, foreigners or tourists are rarely aware of the intentions and perceptions of local people:

*It never occurs to the tourist that the people who inhabit the place cannot stand you ... that behind the closed doors they laugh at your strangeness. Nor are tourists aware that the well-practiced rituals of dissemblance that characterize friendliness have more to do with the rituals of asymmetry and survival, or the desire to keep a job when few are available, than with the fiction of 'native' character (p. 38).*

This was evident among some of the men in the study who said they look for tourists to have sex with because they can be paid for it. The colonized subject who sees tourists as having more romantic finesse and, by extension, as being more civilized and better lovers, is best explained by Fanon (1967). As Fanon reminds us, the colonized who have fully accepted their colonization and the discourses that surround them are deeply embedded in the psyche and behavior of the colonized (p. 252–3). Such practices are a part of a broader colonial regime of oppression that is sedimented in the hearts and minds of Caribbean men and women as subjects and victims:

*When the colonized makes contact with the white world, a certain sensitizing action takes place. If the psychic structure is weak, one observes a collapse of the ego. The colonized stops behaving as an actionable person. The goal of his behavior will be the "other" (in the guise of the white man), for the "other" alone can give them worth. That is on the ethical level: self-esteem. [...] Man is only human to the extent to which he tries to impose his existence on another man in order to be recognized by him. As long as he has not been effectively recognized by the other, that other will remain the theme of his actions. It is on that other being, on recognition by that other being, that his own human worth and reality depend. Is that other being in whom the meaning of his life is condensed (p. 217).*

### Hyperheterosexualization and gay profiling

The gender roles, class dynamics, and idealizations of

hypermasculinity and hyperheterosexualization that influence the negotiation of same-sex relationships complicate HIV/AIDS education interventions. Many older gay men embody traditional hyperheterosexual and hypermasculine gender roles to fulfill their sexual needs, using chat lines and social media sites, as well as cell phone cards and other gift offerings for sex with younger or less financially stable partners. In the extraction of cash benefits, there appears to be a silence on gender role expectations and the negotiation of safe sex practices. Most of the younger men interviewed who were not financially stable said that the decision to have safe sex was not up to them. Instead, it was up to the more financially stable or older person. As one participant explained, echoing others, "a man with money has a place. I could go and have sex with him, sleep over sometimes, and spend a nice weekend. My neighbors don't have to know I am bulling."

The power relations vested in a person who has a good job, combined with the belief that money = guaranteed sex = relationship, define the social and cultural constructions of gay male relationships in Trinidad and Tobago. According to Parker et al, (2000), the politics of gender sexuality—who one is permitted to have sex with, in what ways, under what circumstances, and with what specific outcomes—are never random. Such possibilities are defined through "explicit and implicit rules imposed by the sexual cultures of specific communities and the underlying power relations" (p. 7). These explicit and implicit rules resonate with the history of slavery, in which young slaves were often defined as the sexual property of their masters. Beckles (1989) informs us that slavery meant not only compulsory extraction of labour from Blacks, but also, in theory at least, slave owners' right to total sexual access (p. 141–2).

Indeed some of the participants talked about their first love and sexual experiences at the age of 13 and 14 with much older, more mature men in their 30s and 40s. A number of men in the Chat Room group reflected on their childhood same sex experiences and coming out. As one young man in particular said: "When I was 13, I met my first love of my life. He was 35. I went to his place daily for sex and he would take care of me and buy me everything I want. He was also the top or the man in the relationship." This relationship, he added, lasted for two years. This raises fundamental questions about the point at which sex, love, and the exchange of money turns into rape and the abuse of power. Is it possible for a thirteen-year-old to talk about his first love with a person in their forties? Or are we talking about sexual exploitation and child prostitution? Do older men see their masculinity as threatened, weakened or emasculated if they have relationships with men their own age? Or does homophobia and the illegality of homosexuality force them into relationships with younger men to secure and maintain their own masculinity?

As Hope (2001) reminds us in her work on homophobia in Jamaica, for some, "the intense paranoia of male

homosexuality is a reflection of the hyperheterosexualization of Caribbean masculinities, most apparent among working classes." For many Caribbean men, as she explains, the location of their masculine gender identity must be understood in relation to how men see and understand women, their roles, and socialization. This negotiation of identity is complex and multilayered, and always in dialogue with women; that is, erasing all signs of effeminophobia. "Here," as she states, "heterosexual conquests and a hatred of homosexuality (internalized homophobia and self hate) are ways in which men who do not want to be outed access their entire cache of masculinity, and manhood is secured" (p. 5).

It is clear that these various practices—young men seeking older men, older men seeking young men, and local men seeking tourists—produce forms of gay sexual profiling. Such dangerous and limiting categories, along with the construction of masculinity, sexuality, and love as economically driven, raise a number of important issues. First, does being gay in Trinidad and Tobago mean needing to have money in order to meet other gay men and have sex? Does it mean that men who are financially poor do not have sex with other financially poor men? Does the consumerist nature of same-sex practices mean that the buyer can do anything he wishes, including engaging in unsafe sexual practices? Does it mean that gay male sex or sexual relationships equate with the destruction of the body and self image?

### Denial and representation

The complexity of disclosing or denying HIV status creates further challenges for AIDS education. As one participant said, "I do not want him to leave me because I love him. So if he know I have HIV, he will leave me. I want love, not rejection and stigma, so I lie to him or anybody who love me and can take care of me." Not only do homophobia and heteropatriarchy force both heterosexual and gay men to lie from young, but the betrayal can have a snowball effect—'no one told me they were HIV positive, so why should I have to tell other people that I am?' What is disturbing here is that HIV positive persons who willingly and knowingly pass on the virus are not only aware of the dangers of unprotected sex and non-disclosure, but also of the need for honesty, preventative measures, the need to know, to seek treatment and how to live healthy with HIV. Disclosing their status also becomes violently complicated for some because it increases fears of violence, stigma, discrimination, and communal out-casting and ostracism. Other participants said: "I do not need to tell anybody my status" or "I am bi-sexual, you know—on the "down low" as they say in America—and will not tell anybody who I having sex with, and my child mother doh know I does have sex with man them." To avoid responsibility, these men do not label themselves as gay or bisexual, nor do



they tell their female partners that they have sex with men. It is also very easy for them to use American terms to make serious issues seem painless and cool. As men are socialized not to show their true feelings, using these terms helps them to mask their feelings and the pain of living with HIV.

Other comments by participants reflected the deep social taboos, emotional complexity, and forms of resistance surrounding gay relationships and HIV status. As one man confessed: "I went into the relationship knowing that he had HIV. I wanted to take the risk of having sex without condoms with him to prove my love for him was pure." Another said: "I know two guys who are HIV and they say they want to bring down as many others with them. They say they on a mission." And as a third participant made clear:

*You know in Trinidad, if you want to be gay, do not flaunt/show it and people will say you are nice and they will love you for not pushing it in their face. But the minute you try to let people know you are gay, they will stone you, beat you, laugh at you, and you doh want to pass in front of them. So you think I will tell people I have HIV/AIDS? Yuh crazy?*

Lying to find love by not disclosing one's HIV status is complex, and unfolding its many complicated layers requires more work. However, it was clear from some of my discussions with men from the Chat Room that those who identified as heterosexual and those who saw themselves as hypermasculine and embodying a hyper-heterosexual orientation tended to be the men who, for the most part, did not want to discuss their status because it was or should be assumed that they were HIV negative. Chng and Gelia-Vergas (2000), in their research on ethnic identity, gay identity, and HIV risk taking, also found that MSM who identified as heterosexual were more likely to have unprotected sex and lie about their status (p. 326–339). Given the epidemic nature of HIV, Decena (2008) has questioned the "orthodoxy of compulsory disclosure," insisting that Black MSM should disclose their same-sex realities and actions on purely epidemiological or programmatic grounds (p.397–413). Further complications for HIV education include how to reach men who construct themselves as heterosexual because they are married to female partners. MSM who sometimes engage in unprotected sex with one male partner outside of their married relationship, for both to understand the need and importance for engaging in protected sex and to realize that unprotected sex is not about building and sustaining relationships or a demonstration of trust that his bi-sexual encounters will be protected from his wife.

Stigma and discrimination toward homosexuality in the Caribbean have a negative and pervasive effect on MSM. They have high levels of internalized homophobia, self-hate, religious guilt, effemophobia, and seldom disclose their orientation and, by extension, their HIV status.

Caribbean men also care a great deal about what their family, friends and neighbors think about their sexual preferences. This was clearly communicated in interviewing one of the participants in the study who said he avoided wearing any bright clothing colours coming to his home because he did not want the neighbors to think he has gay friends or that he might be gay. Religious guilt is also a conduit for blocking effective HIV interventions and HIV disclosure in the lives of many MSM who attend organized religious institutions that have negative effects on homosexuality. Greater internalized homophobia, according to Huebner et al., (2002), is also associated with lower awareness of HIV prevention services and with fewer changes in the perception of one's ability to use condoms (p. 30).

### **Stigma and the fear of being found out**

Many participants talked about not looking at or cruising other men in public in order to avoid being stigmatized as gay or bullers. As Brown and Chevannes (1998) inform us in their work on masculinity, young men and boys are restricted from displaying overt signs of tenderness toward one another and are expected to show affection by "greeting each other with clenched fists, backslaps, hey bro, and other brotherly or manly aggressive expressions" (p. 30). Further, the expectation to hide any form of homoeroticism acts as a male opium, making it impossible to engender a discussion on affection, tenderness and feelings as it relates to how to men understand themselves and, by extension, their level of comfort in talking about HIV, safer sex negotiations and stigma.

Both the male gaze and public stigma are hindrances to HIV education. In the interviews, many of the men said: "If I tell my family and friends how I get HIV, I will have to explain too much, and that is too stressful." Some argued, "it will be stress and pressure for the rest of my HIV life." The fear of being identified as having HIV clearly shows the pressures of stigmatization. Although most of the men interviewed were looking for love, affection, family approval, security and public affirmation, they all knew the social, economic, violent, and alienating consequences of telling their partners the truth about their status. Homophobia and heteropatriarchy make young gay and heterosexual men prisoners of a particular system of ideological oppression that teaches them to not tell the truth about themselves. Further, as young men or boys they measure themselves and their self-worth in relation to others that they estimate to be similar and to other siblings in their communal and immediate families. Hiding their HIV status secures them a temporary sense of security and validation about who and what they are.

The tabooing and illegality of homosexuality drives individuals underground and leads them to seek social acceptance by adopting a visible hyperheterosexual lifestyle. For example, the participants pointed out that, in some of the younger-to-older relationships, the older men

are the more "straight or hyper-heterosexual acting one." When asked how safe sex is negotiated in relation to self-perception and age differences, the younger men said that most older men do not identify as gay because they feminize the younger men in their relationships. By feminizing the younger men, they act out their hegemonic heterosexualization and put up a hypermasculine front in order to protect their sexual identities.

Chevanne's work (2001) on Caribbean masculinity is very instructive here. He informs us that socialization into heterosexuality leads Caribbean men to construct, maintain, and celebrate hypermasculinity. He writes that having one's first sexual experience, having a child, and/or setting up an independent household are more important indicators of reaching adulthood than other social factors like jobs or education (p. 215). Power plays an important role in the social construction of masculinity, especially in the opposition, in male same-sex relations, between wealthy hegemonic masculinity and marginalized or working class masculinity. In wealthy hegemonic same-sex masculinity, the dominant Caribbean consumerist cultural ideals of what it means to be a man become the terrain on which all marginalized or subordinated masculinities are constructed and performed.

Thinking of wealthy same-sex hegemonic masculinity in this way allows us to understand why the older men feel they have to provide all the material possessions for the younger boys/men. It reassures their wealthy hypermasculinity and their ability to control the relationship without negotiation. In addition, most young Caribbean men do not feel that they are really men unless they are sexually active and acting out hetero-hypermasculinity. As Brown and Chevannes (1998) write about young men's hypermasculinity: "Boys greet each other with clenched fists and backslaps, and often use other forms of aggression to express their feelings" (p. 30). This aggression also plays itself out in the roles that drive some of their sexual encounters and relationships. The main reason the young men in the study said they engage in unsafe sexual practices was fear of losing the older, more financially secure man who is providing for them. The man who provided was also the active, top or insertive partner, while the younger, and in some cases, the lighter skinned man, was the passive, bottom or receptive partner. When the older men were asked why they assumed the dominant and penetrative role with younger men, they replied that they were seen as the masculine one and that they liked acting out heterosexual roles within their relationship to reassure their masculinity. It is clear for these older men who have sex with younger men that the articulation or action of penetration reinforces power, domination, hypermasculinity and hyperheterosexualization. In addition, as mentioned above, the passive partner does not negotiate the conditions for having sex. As an older man informed me: "I am paying for everything he wants. I am paying for everything he has and I will decide if we use the

condom." When I asked what that meant to him, he said, "power, masculinity and control."

Unprotected sex in these situations is not only seditious, random or unintentional, but rather a form of hypermasculine barebacking driven by a form of hyperheterosexualization that erases all safe sex negotiation. There is also the myth in the minds of some that 'skin to skin is in' or that going bareback is 'the real deal.' This prevailing myth makes some couples not negotiate the use of condoms because skin to skin is in and 'if you love me you do not have to worry.' The role of gendered imbalances sex between MSM sexual relationships reinforces the argument that gender roles in the Caribbean and elsewhere, along with failing to disclose one's status, is a major contributor to the spread of HIV/AIDS. Barebacking sex in these situations is not the same as for two HIV negative partners who are in a long-term relationship, have been tested, and agree to having unprotected sex. Of particular concern here is the extent to which internalized homophobia, religion, guilt and stigma have created a sense of constructed hopelessness and respect for the men and their partners. "Stigma against people living with HIV/AIDS and homosexuality was implicated in low levels of use of HIV testing, treatment and care services, and the reluctance of HIV positive people to reveal their serostatus to their sexual partners. Data reveal a pressing need for anti-stigma measures for both homophobia and HIV/AIDS, and for training for health and human service professionals" (Ruth and Robert, 2005).

## Danger

Other risky sexual practices leading to unsafe sex also emerged from the interviews. The family situations that some of the men were living in forced them to meet for sex outside or in public spaces such as parks, below bridges, washrooms, abandoned buildings, or near the river and beach areas. Some also took the risk of having sex at the dance clubs they frequent, as the security closes their eyes to it. One young man told me he has sex with men for money and is subjected to repeated abuse. He also told me he became friends with a group of male street sex workers who socialized him into street prostitution. He could not tell his parents. He was living at home and prostituting. He said the men had threatened to kill him or have him arrested if he stopped. Like the lives of others, his life is endangered not only by the various settings in which he conducts his sexual activities, but also by unsafe sexual practices. Given the lack of legal and sexual protection, rampant homophobia, and the multiple partners with whom men engage for the purpose of sex money, the risk of HIV/AIDS infection increases dramatically. These street sex workers also feel very disenfranchised from the larger culture, society and community due to the taboo nature of prostitution

sex, homophobia and discrimination.

### Saga Boy Calypso

Trinidad and Tobago are known for their steel pan and calypso. Claysonian themes include but are not limited to issues and topics such as the role of women in society, family issues, sports, nationalism, education, ethnicity, race, global issues, and above all the reinforcement of dominant and persistent forms of masculinity and father. As a dominant cultural tradition and integral part of the social imaginary, calypso contributes to constructions of hypermasculinity and hyperheterosexuality. Calypsonian Penguin's song "Soft Man" (1983), for example, reinforces ideologies of male dominance over women by suggesting that masculinity is centered on an erect penis. At the same time, Shurwayne Winchester's popular calypso song "Woman By My Side" (2007) goes like this:

Listen now, hear me now  
 God made Adam first, he was the first man  
 Then he found out Adam was lonely, and his companion  
 was Eve, a woman Lord Why should I go against myself  
 thinking this is wrong eh  
 But it was written in Leviticus  
 Man should not lie with man, it is an abomination.  
 Many in the Caribbean will argue that Winchester is only  
 reinforcing the religious values of the Caribbean and, by  
 extension, the heteronormative nature of a society where  
 LGBTIQ persons are religiously condemned. Delmano's  
 1981 song "Sodom and Gomorrah" also contributes to  
 this perception. As the chorus goes:  
 For we are living in this modern Sodom and Gomorrah  
 And very soon an angel go visit we here in the near  
 future  
 So if your wife turn into a pillar of salt, I want you to know  
 that is your fault  
 And if the fire and brimstone fall down on we, I know we  
 are all guilty.

Calypso as popular culture text not only celebrates antigay paranoia, morality, sexual perversion, hyperheterosexualization and hypermasculinity, but also takes great joy in elevating and policing a form of phallocentric masculinity that makes a mockery of gays and effective HIV intervention and awareness. These songs, and others, embody contradictory notions about a fixed or policed masculine identity.

This policing of masculinity influences and shapes the social practices, behaviors, and attitudes of MSM as they navigate the role-playing of top and bottom, safe and unsafe sex, and who decides if a condom is to be worn. In addition to the practices of younger men acquiescing to the power of older men in same-sex relationships, and men engaging in heterosexual dating, marriage and fathering to conceal their homosexuality, other practices

also reinforce hypermasculinity. In Trinidad and Tobago, men with socially constructed feminine qualities are sometimes called "ex-layers." They are ostracized by society and other gay men in general. As an expression for chickens that no longer lay eggs, this feminized derogatory term reinforces the misogyny within Caribbean and Trinidadian culture and demonstrates how gay men socially construct gender roles for other gay men within an already complex and oppressed context. These men are often seen as the ones who are penetrated in sexual encounters, and also as men not to be seen with in public because of the harassment that occurs in a violently homophobic culture<sup>4</sup>. Participants who described themselves in the interviews as "macho" or "butch" made it very clear that they do the penetrating while the feminine men are the receivers without negotiation or discussion.

This policing of constructions of gender poses a number of health risks and challenges for HIV/AIDS education. Intervention HIV research and development in the Caribbean have not done much to reduce stigma and discrimination against sexual minority communities. For example, more research needs to be done in the Caribbean on serosorting or on how MSM select partners according to their assumed/guessing/profiling behavior or known HIV status. We also know very little about different sexual networks. There is still a tendency to target HIV education interventions to stigmatized and non-stigmatized communities.

### DISCUSSION AND STRATEGIES OF CHANGE

Knowingly spreading HIV/AIDS and going from person to person is a carnival of barbarity and cocktail for disaster that, for some, combines self-hate and anger at having HIV with the goal of pulling others down with them. The findings from the study reveal the extent to which homophobia, heterosexualization, neo-colonialism, popular culture, and ideologies of hypermasculinity impact the sexual practices, relationships, lives, security, and self-worth of men who have sex with men in Trinidad and Tobago. First, it is clear that some of the men who have unprotected sex are both subject to and, in turn, create and promote a system of gender, race, class, and cultural norms that place them in extremely risky unsafe sexual situations. Second, these situations are masked and kept silent in the effort to avoid stigmatization, violence and legal repercussions. Third, issues of migration, colonialism, and racialization within the Caribbean highlight

<sup>4</sup> While I was delivering a guest lecture in 2007 on men and masculinity, a student told me the following story: At his home, there were mangoes hanging on his side of the yard from his neighbour's mango tree. He thought this was great because he would get some mangoes. But when his two boys didn't pick the mangoes, he worried that they were gay. He asked if they saw the mangoes. Then he made them pick them to prove that nothing was wrong with their masculinity.

social problems associated with sex work or sex for money. Taken together, the unwritten rules of hyper-masculinity, class, and power complicate effective HIV/AIDS education interventions and the changing of behaviors. There is no doubt that better intervention strategies are needed not only to reduce the spread of HIV, but also to empower the many men who feel powerless and hopeless without recourse to a rights-based agenda.

Homosexuality is still illegal in most of the Caribbean, with the exception of the Bahamas. The Buggery, Sexual Offences and Morality Acts make sex between two people of the same sex punishable by imprisonment. The accompanying fear and silence of daily homophobic attacks and the fear of being criminalized or beaten by the police if caught makes it hard on stigmatized populations. These activities include torture, drowning, stoning, burning by being placed in car tires (UNAIDS; Robert and Lewis, 2007), as well as employment discrimination and other forms of persecution. Homosexual persecution combined with a positive HIV status is a frightening reality for many in the Caribbean. These fearful feelings and hegemonic acts of hypermasculine and hyperfeminine violence coupled with state criminalization force people to be secretive about their status and sexual orientation. By extension, this contributes to the spread of the virus through a lack of protection, fear, stigma, and not being tested or avoiding knowing one's status.

The Buggery laws make it harder for MSM to seek out their status and, in some cases, when their status is known, to seek out available treatment options. Male sex workers, gay men, and drug injector users, by virtue of their disfranchised or marginalized status, are thought to have lost themselves and their right to equal human rights and protection from the law. Traumatized by fears of HIV stigma and homophobic persecution, they sometimes contemplate or even commit suicide, withdraw from LGBTQ social activities and women's support groups, live in seclusion, or seek asylum abroad. Asylum seekers also run the risk of not returning to their country of origin because of their sexual orientation or because they expose the Caribbean's poor human rights track record on protecting persons living with HIV/AIDS.

### **Structural change**

Structural inequalities such as the lack of LGBTQ rights, poverty, and HIV/AIDS illiteracy need to be targeted in a language and manner that makes sense to the communities of men involved. Vulnerable populations can only change their behaviors and gain a sense of self-worth when the social and political climate embraces them and grants them rights and civility. Because the engine driving human rights and law reform today is undoubtedly the HIV/AIDS pandemic or epidemic and the

economic impact it has on the economies of the Caribbean, government interest in sex and sexual politics should be positive and liberating, and not only focused on moral regulation. UNAIDS argues that 85,000 children have been orphaned since 1999 in the Caribbean alone by parents who have died from AIDS (2008). The future of youth is at risk. We and the governments of the Caribbean collectively need to quantify the economic, cultural and social cost of HIV/AIDS in the Caribbean. For example, what stresses has HIV/AIDS placed on health care systems, loss of productivity, and loss of technical and professional expertise? Also, with an unemployment rate of 14.2% (Central Bank of Trinidad & Tobago, 2007), we need to consider to what extent the sex tourism industry and racialized constructions of gay relationships are a by-product of the economy and how this has affected the rate and spread of HIV/AIDS among gay men.

### **Education and research**

The homophobic gendering of discrimination and taboos against MSM in particular have to be more publicly addressed by government education initiatives to secure peoples' safety. Hyperheterosexualization, hypermasculinity, religion, and a culture that virtually celebrates the violation of gay peoples' rights, combined with a gay culture of sexual secrecy, makes HIV and gender education a huge task. Men who have sex with men must be able to talk about their feelings and sense of self, and have pride in who they are.

The lack of empirical research on the linkage between Caribbean masculinities and HIV transmission perpetuates a vicious cycle in which assumptions, stereotypes and fear trump the advancement of effective educational and policy interventions. Clearly the link between masculinities and HIV is not an easy one to understand and get honest answers from. However, as a result of lobbying by LGBTIQ groups and organizations, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention and other public health agencies in Trinidad and Tobago have launched campaigns to study men who have sex with men that do not identify as gay.

### **Challenging homophobia**

A major challenge for HIV/AIDS education is how to turn feelings of repulsion against men who have sex with men into feelings of love, respect and civility. Homophobia in Trinidad and Tobago, as in the Caribbean more generally, is located within a particular system of ideological thought and practice that includes a cocktail of resistance from conservative religious and parental views.

In this climate, what are the opportunities and challenges for sexual rights in Trinidad and Tobago today? We

need to work on unlearning and relearning how to overcome the draconian cultural biases against LGBTQ rights in the Caribbean. Here we are talking about addressing generations and generations of colonially reinforced oppressive and dehumanizing thought processes. How do we learn to unlearn an entire generation of taboos, sexual stigmatization, and Caribbean mores around a fixed and nationalistic understanding of masculinity, sex and homosexuality? It starts with overturning our archaic laws, addressing poverty and illiteracy, and promoting youth education, feminist education, and education on human rights.

## Conclusion

The moral regulation, bionationalism, and state-ordained homophobic violence that construct a heteronormative discourse where words hurt, the social action of gay men is shamed, assaulted and embarrassed, and men are forced into a hypermasculine masking of their true desires and behaviors, must shift from hate to love, respect and acceptance. To cure HIV/AIDS we cannot and must not suffer from a shortage of love, kindness, empathy, respect and forgiveness. The pernicious forces are not the men themselves but the social, cultural, religious and political forces and relations producing fear, stigma, shame, and response, namely homophobia, hypermasculinity and heteropatriarchy. These forms of discrimination are ample evidence that Caribbean MSM want the same rights as everyone else.

The complex, multilayered gender roles and sexual taboos embedded in a colonial system must be challenged and unlearned in order to create a more successful human rights and HIV/AIDS education that gets the message across. Because masculinity is tied to how dominant, violent or hypermasculine you are, and how much risk you can engage in, the challenge is to develop HIV/AIDS strategies sensitive to the many forms that dominant hypermasculinity takes while also embracing different and/or soft masculinities. Masculinity is not a fixed concept and is fraught with conflicting and contradictory behaviors, attitudes and messages in different contexts and situations. To this end, HIV interventions must understand the link between the fragilities of different masculinities and the tropes they embrace as they are constructed and reaffirmed. There are also cultural, racial and the colonial sexualization of racism issues to be unpacked here, such as economics and colourism to relationships and the conservative traditional masculine roles that are maintained and produced in sexual encounters between MSM. The challenge is how to reach MSM who do not adhere to the norms of Caribbean hyperheterosexualization and hypermasculinity. More challenging is the modern construction of family, non-cohabiting couples, same-sex or same gender loving couples, non-sexually exclusive couples alongside monogamous homosexual and heterosexual

couples, raises more challenging interventions for education and social change. We know very little about and do not want to talk about these different forms of families; hence there is limited information or research to work from. This type of education needs to be directed towards health care providers, HIV educators, the family, the community and others involved in HIV prevention and awareness campaigns.

Opportunities exist therefore for research that can investigate and address HIV and health promotion in ways that challenge hegemonic masculinity and non-conforming traditional stereotypical constructs of manhood. We have done a great deal of work for MSM but very little has been done for "gender nonconforming" men who blend attributes stereotypically associated with various forms of masculinities and femininities (Connell, 1987). More risk taking in HIV public discourses must be taken through postering, media messages, and social media outreach (twittering, blogging, facebook and interactive websites for comments and education). More men who are gay in public life and have high profiles need to join the struggle, take coming our risk, and be constructively engaged, because we all have levels and measures of responsibly. By been open about our sexual orientation, we by extension seek our rights to public expression, public intimacy and our sexual identity. As MSM, we must also ask ourselves what stands to be gained or lost if we commit and connect personally with the work and lives of others in order to achieve recognition, respect and rights. Admittedly, one's mouth is muzzled by who feeds it and what it eats, but one's body also belongs to oneself. Therefore it is important to ask what social meanings and violence are inscribed in silence and how it relates to freedom, justice, respect and equality.

When people are empowered, have better access to resources without the attachment of taboos, they can take control of and make healthier choices around HIV prevention. To be an agent means to be capable of exerting some degree of control over the social relations in which one is enmeshed and that one lives through daily. In turn, this implies the ability to transform those social relations that violently socially and culturally police men who "act effeminate and men who have HIV" lives, bodies, minds and conditions. AIDS education needs to assist male MSM, street sex workers, and those living in isolation, denial, shame, and poverty become agents who understand their situation and vulnerability. Understanding marginalization, stigma, and discrimination is equally important as while promoting speaking out and challenging internalized homophobia and emotionality. But most importantly, MSM must see that homoeroticism can be used as resistance and this seems to be an appropriate starting point.

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