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PATRIARCHAL POWER AND WOMEN'S RESISTANCE IN TRINIDAD

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Chapter 1

Introduction

It is recognised that one cannot generalise about the twin
island Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, as though we are one each
has had a different history and so to generalise would be to
misrepresent one. As a point of clarity, Tobago joined Trinidad
administratively in 1889. This paper pays specific attention
to urban women in Trinidad as feminist activism is more
concentrated in this area. Trinidad is referred to as the writer
is from this island and so is more familiar with activities in
this area. However, chapters three to five can be safely applied
to both Trinidad and Tobago though reference is made only to
Trinidad.

Trinidad's economy was initially based on sugar cane which
was produced under conditions of slavery. With the abolition of
the slave trade later followed by the emancipation of slaves in
1834, plantation owners tried to attract Spanish, English, French
and Chinese immigrants to work on the estates. This venture
failed and thus began the period of Indian Indentureship.
Indians were encouraged to migrate to Trinidad from India to work
on the estates for fixed wages. This period ended in 1917.

During the period of slavery the African women brought to
the region were treated as nothing more than a means of
production. Marriage was prohibited and the bearing of children
was discouraged. However, with the abolition of the slave trade
in 1808 when it became illegal to import slaves, slave women were
encouraged to have babies. They, however, devised methods not
to have children, thus retaining some control over their bodies.
They used their power of resistance by not having babies that
they would never see. It was the practice that their babies would
be taken away from them and sold into slavery. Thus began the
struggles of the Afro-Trinidadian woman against imposed
institutions to retain power over her own life through her power
of resistance.

Indo-Trinidadian women on the other hand came to the region as wage earners on the estates albeit earning less than their male counterparts; but they had some measure of economic independence. Indo-Trinidadian women though they had according to Mohammed (1988), "access to their independence and autonomy over their own lives, they recreated a pattern of life which was restrictive and oppressive" (p383). This marked a period of heavy power struggles and important social changes, where women lost out.

Many socio-economic changes took place within the society during the post-independence era from 1962, equal education and economic opportunities were implemented for the sexes. Women took advantage of these opportunities particularly during the oil boom years of 1974 to 1981 and continuing today. These advantages, however, have not improved the position of the majority of women in the labour force, as many women still tend to be concentrated in the lower paying jobs.

However, during the period of the 1980s as the number of university educated women increased and it was realised that due to the traditional power relations existing within the society, women were being by-passed when it came to promotion, they showed their resistance to this discrimination by strengthening the support of the women's movement and the notion of feminism.

The 'new' feminist movement of the 1970s era in Trinidad has been influenced by the UN declaration of 1975 as International Women's Year and the period of 1975-1985 as the decade for women - declarations which (Reddock,1988) resulted in a rekindling, refocusing and radicalizing of the movement. This 'new' Women's Movement in examining the patriarchal power relationships has influenced issues such as studies on women's participation in politics, and women's legal status. The movement has spoken out against domestic and sexual violence. This has resulted in legal legislations in favour of women.

In Trinidad, it can be said that the patriarchal power relationship which may be one of female/female, male/male, or male/female relationship reinforces the oppression and subordination of women through various institutions. This paper examines the patriarchal power relationship which seeks to subordinate women, keeping them in their 'normalised' role, and the paper also examines women's means of resistance through the politics of feminism.

The objective of this study is to put into focus the direct and indirect achievements of women's resistance in Trinidad, so that the women's movement, as it forges ahead would pay attention to the effects of its work and the notion of feminism on the wider society.

Research Method

Secondary data will be used which will include literature from books, journals, newsletters and other sources of data available at the ISS library and other libraries in The Netherlands. Some primary data will also be used such as statistical information and reports by government departments as well as my own observations.

Structure of the Research Paper

Chapter two places women in the socio-economic history of Trinidad, paying attention to the contributions of the two major ethnic groups - Afro-Trinidadian women during slavery and the contributions of the Indo-Trinidadian women during indentureship. Women's changing roles through education is also examined.

Chapter three examines gender and power relations within Trinidad and in so doing uses the theory of patriarchal power as it relates to Indo and Afro-Trinidadian women and as it operates within the educational system and the labour force.

Chapter four pays attention to the resistance of women to the patriarchal power and so examines the notion of feminism and the work of the Women's Movement in Trinidad from the period of the 1970s to the present time.

Chapter five examines the impact of feminism on the Trinidad society and its impact on the media, the state, women and men. This chapter also summarises the main arguments raised throughout the paper.

Chapter 2

Economic History of Trinidad

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to give an idea of the economic
and social history from which Trinidad women emerged. In so
doing it will briefly discuss the experience of Afro-Trinidadian
women during slavery up to independence and that of Indo-
Trinidadian women during the period of indentureship. There are
other ethnic groups which are not dealt with.

Although today the lives of Trinidad women do not differ
greatly, Trinidad women are not a homogenous group. Divisions
of race, colour, class, social and economic status affect their
lives and are responsible for significant differences of their
perceptions of themselves, their roles and contributions to the
development of Trinidad. It would be difficult to fully
understand the contemporary period without some knowledge of the
pre-independence period.

Historically, Trinidad experienced colonization by the
European powers and was captured from Spain by Britain in 1797,
remaining a British colony until 1962 when the country gained its
independence.

Afro-Trinidadian Woman in the pre-independence era

Trinidad's economy was initially based on sugar cane which
was produced under conditions of slavery for the purpose of
capital accumulation. Afro-Trinidadian women like men came to
the region as labourers working the fields side by side with men
and subjected to the same punishment as men. They were thus a
people stripped of their economic and political power.

Reddock (1984) notes that women predominated in the back breaking work of field labour. In the final years of slavery when the workers were being forced to work harder because of the restrictions on slave importation, the women provided most of the labour since they were greater in number.

In spite of the dominance of women on the estates, men monopolised the specialised and prestigious occupations of the factory performing tasks such as boilers and distillers. Outside the factory they were the drivers and the watchmen. Reddock has recorded that few specialised tasks were allowed to women – they were mainly domestics or in the hospitals as 'nurses' or 'midwives'. Reddock stressed that, not even in the 'domestic' domain did women hold positions of prestige. The head servant was often male and he usually controlled the houseboys. In some families if a head female was employed her main task was that of assisting the lady of the house in dressing, to do needlework, and to prepare parties and puddings.

During slavery the African women brought to the region were, as mentioned earlier, treated merely as a means of production for the purpose of capital accumulation. This practice was most acute as is evidenced by the fact that slave women were discouraged from getting married and having children. If found pregnant they were punished. Carty (1988) notes that the shrewd capitalist planters thought it cheaper to buy than to 'breed' slaves.

However, with the abolition of slavery in 1808 when plantation owners were banned from importing more slaves, slave women were being encouraged to have babies, but by then they had developed strong resentments towards the plantation owners and devised methods not to have children. They used their reproductive capacity their only power of resistance against the institutions, to show their objection to slavery by not having children for slave owners. Women according to feminist historians, preferred to suffer the pain of abortion and

infanticide rather than to give birth to children which would be taken away from them and sold.

After the emancipation of slavery too, during the plantation-peasant mode of production, the marginalisation of ex-slave women as heads of single-parent households became a way of life. Men were given all the skilled jobs on the estates being the ones with the skills as they were the only ones to whom skilled tasks were allocated during slavery. After slavery women were employed only on a temporary basis when there was a need for extra labour as during cane cutting.

The instability of occasional work (Carty, 1988) meant temporary shelter and constant moving around, which encouraged temporary and unstable unions and women headed households. Accustomed to working and her independence, plus economic need forced Afro-Caribbean women into independent small farming enterprises. Because women were now their own bread winners, they had no need to rely on men for economic benefits and so there was no need for marriage and male power which could reduce their independence and freedom.

During the 19th century different agricultural products were the main stay of the Trinidad economy. However, from the beginning of the 20th century light manufacturing and agro-based industries were set up. The 20th century also saw the development of the petroleum industry which was to become the most important contribution to the Trinidad economy during this period, bringing about changes not only in the economy but also major changes in the life style of women in the country.

Indo-Trinidadian Women in the pre-independence era

The emancipation of slaves in 1834 saw the introduction of labourers such as the French, German, Portuguese and Chinese to work the estates. This failed and Indian immigration was encouraged resulting in an ethnically diverse population, but

historically more important, the period of indentured labour began in Trinidad in 1845 and lasted until 1917. Unlike the period of slavery, indentured labourers were contracted for fixed periods of five years contracts at fixed wages.

Within the period of indentureship more males were recruited than females. Mohammed (1988), records that between 1881 to 1891 there were 2,117 males to every 1,000 females; a situation which Indian men found stressful as it created problems in the sphere of sexual relations. The planters, however, were concerned with the imbalance of the sex ratio for economic reasons as a stagnated or low birth rate meant less workers, if and when the period of indentureship was discontinued. By 1911 there were 1,354 males to every 1,000 females an attempt having been made to correct the imbalance.

Indo-Trinidadian women unlike Afro Trinidadian women came to the region as wage earners on the estates. They worked along side their male counterparts often doing the same amount of work as the men did but receiving lower wages. They, however, were excluded from the highly paid prestigious jobs which were reserved for men only.

Some Indian women who were recruited according to (Reddock 1984) were women who were already independent, single women, widows who would have been forbidden to remarry in India, women who had separated from or had been abandoned by their husbands and other women of `easy virtue'.

However, it should be noted that during the period of indentureship Indo-Trinidadian women besides being economically independent, experienced a sense of freedom from the male/female power relationship to which they were accustomed in India and also because they were fewer in number than males. They were a "scarce and valuable resource" (Mohammed 1988:383). Women held the trump card. Men did not appreciate this and so sought ways to force them to retain the traditional power relations of Indian

society to which Indian women eventually conformed. These women
came to the region because of economic and social reasons and
were already not pre-disposed to being easily controlled and
subordinated by their male counterparts.

The fact that less women migrated as well as the fact that
most of the women were independent and would not allow themselves
to be controlled or easily coerced by men led to much violence
and murder of Indian women by Indian men (Brereton 1979 in
Mohammed 1988). With changes in the economic situation and the
declining importance of sugar the Indo Trinidadians moved into
rice and cocoa growing and market gardening. They remained an
essentially agricultural people.

National independence in 1962 brought many changes within
the society which undoubtedly affected the Indo-Trinidadian
women's lives and roles within the society. With socio-economic
changes taking place, there arose more confident and independent
Indo-Trinidadian women (as would be discussed later), her male
counterparts unable to deal with the changes resorted to verbal
and physical violence against her in an attempt to maintain the
power relationship of dominance to which he was accustomed.

Education in the pre-independence Era

Education is used here as it is seen as a clear indicator
of women's social mobility. It is not the only indicator, but
it is dealt with as education is an indicator of social status
and class within society and it is the pathway to upward social
mobility. After the emancipation of slavery in 1834, attention
was being paid to the education of slaves which stressed the
values and interest of the colonizers. Initially the education
was rather limited to the teaching of the basics of reading and
writing. There was not much difference in the education of boys
and girls. The differentiation, however, developed eventually,
with boys being the only ones exposed to agricultural training
despite the past experiences of women (Reddock 1984).

Secondary education when introduced was the prerogative of the white and coloured bourgeoisie and a few of the upper and middle strata. Education for girls included a heavy bias to domestic service and needlework. The aim of the education of girls then was to make them good mothers and wives. At that time more Afro-Trinidadians were exposed to education than Indo-Trinidadians, 67.7 percent Indo-Trinidadians from 10 years and older were illiterate compared to 10 percent for Afro-Trinidadian women, 3.4 percent of European and 8.3 percent of Chinese (Mohammed 1988).

Prior to the independence of Trinidad from Britain in 1962 under the ruling political party, the People's National Movement, the importance of education as a mechanism of social mobility was recognised by working class Afro- and Indo-Trinidadians, but moreso by the Afro-Trinidadians who took advantage of whatever educational opportunities were available, paying attention to the education of daughters.

A secondary education opened up various possibilities for white collar jobs: teaching, the civil service, journalism, minor positions in business, these opportunities, however, occurred mainly for a minority of urban children of what Brereton (1981) refers to as, "a sort of upper-working-class group"(p126).

The system of public primary education established in 1851 though a crucial factor in the emergence of a black and coloured middle class, was not the only factor. Brereton records that a proper education was the key which opened the door to occupations such as teaching, minor civil service, journalism, printing, pharmacy, medicine, law and clerical and was the crucial factor in the upward mobility of non whites after emancipation but not the only factor as the expansion was also due to the personal efforts of black and coloured people.

The Indo-Trinidadians eventually also saw the importance of

education and made an effort to educate their daughters as well as their sons. Mohammed (1988) referring to university educated women notes that researchers found that whereas higher education had become a normative expectation for middle and upper class girls, a preparation for marriage, for Indian girls securing an education entailed greater sacrifice and more of a break with culture and consequently was seen as the way to a career and personal independence, rather than as preparation for a housewife role.

By the beginning of the 20th century Trinidad's economy was still based on agriculture, with sugar and cocoa dominating the plantation sector. Minor industries such as rice and coconuts progressed and small holders of all races, but particularly the Indo-Trinidadians (Brereton 1981), grew food crops for local consumption. At this time there existed a clear sexual division of labour as according to Reddock (1984) on the plantations many of the skilled artisnal jobs in the factory as well as construction work in the rural areas excluded women. During this period the exploration of oil began and this was to have a great effect on the Trinidad economy creating greater educational and economic opportunities for all women.

Post-Independence Era - 1962

From 1960 onwards information was not differentiated by ethnic categories thus the post independence period is examined in general terms.

Development within this era of the economy and society were of benefit to all groups. Mohammed (1988) states that developments within the education system and economic expansion accelerated the integration of Indian women into the rest of society. An integration which was already slowly in progress with the advent of education in the 1950s.

The wind of change within the economy in the period of the

70s and 80s which created additional jobs in the commercial, petroleum and other industrial and public sectors resulted in many social changes within the society including a great geographic shift of the Indian population (Mohammed 1988), from the rural areas to the towns. Indian women began to move into the public sector as teachers and nurses, and the university educated women into the legal profession.

Education and economic opportunities were eagerly taken up by all women in Trinidad during the oil boom years from 1974 to 1986. This is evidenced by the undergraduate enrolment of students at The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine from the period 1978/79 which reveals an increase in the number of female students entering the university as well as an increase in the number of female graduates which at times equal that of men or could be greater.

In Trinidad the educational levels of women have been rising steadily. Mohammed (1988), Carty (1988) and Reddock (1988) record that even in male dominated fields such as medicine, engineering and law, over the last few years women have been performing as well as or better than their male counterparts. This is, however, not being reflected in the job market. Men are still occupying more and better jobs (Table III and IV).

Conclusion

Women have always been important to and made their contribution to the Trinidad economy from the period of slavery and indentureship when women laboured alongside men on the sugar plantations, which gave them a sense of economic independence and equality (as far as work was concerned) to men. Their status and perception of self changed with the changing economy and education. The inter-relationship of these social and economic variables form a base for further analysis.

Chapter 3

Gender and Power Relations

Introduction

As was pointed out in the previous chapter the Trinidad society is an immigrant society built by migrant plantation labour which gave both Afro and Indo Trinidadian women a sense of economic independence and equality to men. As the mode of the plantation economy changed so did male/female power relations. This has had its impact on women as they relate to men as well as on the nature of male/female relationships.

This chapter examines the power relations which seeks to sustain the oppression and subordination of women in Trinidad looking at their impact on gender and on women's role in society as it relates to education and the labour force. In examining the power relations the paper explores the notion of ideology as used by Althusser in contrast to the teachings of Foucault. The term ideology as defined by Althusser is often used to explain away anomalies within society, and I prefer that it not be used, by readers, in this instance to justify women's subordinate position. In this paper I consider Foucault's concept of power and resistance useful for my analysis.

Ideology

The term ideology as defined by Althusser in his Theses I and II refers to "an imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence"(Weiler 1988:7). In his thesis II (Weiler 1988), Althusser refers to ideology as, "the cultural world that people inherit —a world which is imposed upon them through material practice"(p7). People's ideological view of the world their 'imaginary relationship' to the real conditions of existence, is seen as a reflection of their actions which are governed by the structure of society through,

institutions, rituals, customs, laws of authority etc.
In Althusser's notion of ideology, people are seen to be powerless over the direction of their lives.

In contrast to Althusser, is Foucault, who totally rejects the conception of ideology, particularly as used by Althusser. Foucault sees the notion of ideology as a distorted representation of "men's" real relations. He sees ideology as defined by Althusser as in opposition to science and truth, which he refers to as a form of distortion or falsehood. Instead of ideology Foucault focuses on institutions, bodies of knowledge that he sees as both scientific and/or practical, without one being privileged over the other (Grosz 1990:83). Althusser's conception is an unchanging one, while for Foucault, nothing is static, change is taking place constantly over time.

Patriarchal Power

The term patriarchy was first introduced by Kate Millett (1970). She defines patriarchy as a society in which power resides in male hands - males dominate females, and older males dominate the younger. She asserts that the power relationships in which men control women are institutionalized within patriarchy. She sees social and cultural factors as the foundation of patriarchy and particularly emphasises the importance of family as the cornerstone of patriarchy. For her the family mirrors patriarchy. She sees the family as a patriarchal unit within the patriarchal whole. Millett (1970) has suggested that the situation of all women is determined by the patriarchal relations in all societies.

Since Millett, many theorists have written on the system of patriarchy. Further readings/debates on patriarchy can be found in Bennett (1980); Beechey (1979); Delphy (1977); Einenstein (1978); Hartman(1981); Mies (1986); Mitchell (1973); Young (1981).

Of interest are the views of Michel Foucault, who characterizes society as a "Carcera Archipelago" i.e. an extensive set of islands of power relations – family, work place, school which become colonized by dominant forces such as the state, trapping the individual in order to render him/her docile (Dubois 1991:27).

Foucault unlike Millett does not equate power with a social structure (such as patriarchy), or with social institutions and practices (such as the family or the practices of socialization exercised by it), or with interpersonal force and strength (as in heterosexual and aggressive relations) (Grosz 1990;p87). Rather he sees power as both :

1.   historical systems, aligned across structures, institutions, rituals, practices and individual lives, bringing them together in some context and dividing them in others – a 'substratum' of force relation,

2.   the particular use of the products of these alignments (eg knowledge and practices) to interrogate, regulate, supervise, observe, train, harness and confine the behaviours and subjectivities of individuals and groups (Grosz 1990;87).

Power can be seen as a network which operates within every realm of society and can therefore be strategically resisted and changed anywhere.

Grosz (1990) records that some versions of feminism regard (patriarchal) power as something men, as individuals or as a group, exercise over women – while other versions such as Millett's shared the view that power is something men have and that women lack, which is often equated with physical strength and decision making capacities. For Foucault, however, power is not a thing, an entity, property, quality or commodity. It is not possessed, given, seized, captured, relinquished or exchanged – rather it is exercised. It exists only in actions. It is a complex set of ever changing relations of force – a moveable substratum upon which the economy, mode of production,

mode of governing and decision making, forms of knowledge etc. are conditioned.

Foucault recognizes the fact that women are an oppressed group and explains women's oppression in terms of a "tacital utilization" of the bodies and speech of women and/or the working class for the extraction of knowledge, labour, service and other utilities.   He sees it as a non-complete, non-hegemonic domination - a domination that, by its nature, breeds resistance, a domination never succeeding in total subjugation (Grosz 1990).

One assumption underpinning the Foucauldian framework is that change/emancipation can be more realistically and effectively charted out within its analyses. Struggle and change are possibilities as resistance is an equally significant form of power, be it patriarchal or other.

Some theorists refer to the term patriarchy. Foucault, however, speaks of power. In this paper the term **patriarchal power** is used, and is here defined as the attempts of men and women in society to function within and influence the institutions within society, to keep the stereotypical norms which seek to confine men to one role which often entails domination and women to another which places them in a position of subordination in an attempt to dictate change and to control resistance, hence keeping a "normalised" society. Patriarchal power is, however, not absolute as resistance has always taken place and will continue to take place.

The concept of patriarchal power is used in this analysis as it provides the framework to link women's oppression and subordination to the wider society, at the same time providing a comprehensive understanding of women's oppression and subordination in the male/female and female/female changing power relationship.

Also, technological sophistication, prosperity, and changing

economic and educational patterns have resulted in women's enhanced consciousness of their will and sense of autonomy in determining their own lives. Thus the relationship between Afro and Indo Trinidadian men and women has been altered in both positive and negative ways over time. I will examine in the rest of the paper how women dealt with patriarchal power through their power of resistance.

Afro-and-Indo Trinidadian women and Patriarchal Power

Afro-Trinidadian women make up 39.9 percent of the female population while Indo-Trinidadian women account for 39.6 percent(1980 Census in Mohammed 1988). These women are marginalised not because of lack of skills nor low academic achievement, as much as by the patriarchal power relations which dictate a rigid sexual division of labour, with men designated the status of family wage earners and providers and women their assumed dependents or child raisers and housekeepers, a legacy from the British colonizers.

Afro-Trinidadian women [like Indo-Trinidadian women] (Carty 1988), have long been accorded a classification related to that of the men in their lives, their social mobility has been measured in relation to the socio-economic relation of their fathers, brothers, husbands, sons or lovers, despite the fact that the majority of women have always been self supporting.

Among Afro-Trinidadians attitudes to male power relationships and to marriage are ambivalent and contradictory. On the one hand girls are taught the importance of being economically independent as to ensure their survival and that of their families, whether a male is present or not. Ellis (1986:p8) noted that this sense of independence created the image of the strong [Trinidadian] woman who can cope with anything. Both Afro-and-Indo Trinidadian girls are also taught (by their mothers) what can be considered the normalising power relations which are, that, it is important to have a male partner and that

in the male-female power relationship the man is dominant and that the woman must show deference.

The traditional normalising values regarding the role of Afro-and-Indo Trinidadian women in society are evident in every social institution and realm of social interaction. In relations of the family a very high status is given to motherhood. Carty (1988) records that women are accorded less respect if they are everything else but mothers, than if they are mothers and nothing else. The cultural expectation that women should have children is rather intense and one to which most women seem to conform either directly or indirectly.

Afro-Trinidadian women, even if cognizant of the discrimination women have suffered in the past, maintain reservations about asserting clear positions independent of men. They still see women's role as chiefly wife and mother, (Carty 1988) a role which fits well into the normalising patriarchal power relation but, "diverges sharply from the actual position of their forbears who were first and foremost labourers, though given no recognition for their contribution to social production", (p38) hence men are paradoxically regarded as 'sole providers'.

Indo-Trinidadian women unlike Afro-Trinidadian women emerged from a system where they saw themselves as the backbone of family life, the keepers of their culture, they were expected to sacrifice their ambitions for the benefit of their brothers and husbands. Gopeesingh (1989) stated that Indo-Trinidadian women were generally seen as extensions of their husbands, not as people in their own right. Consider the words of an Indian girl in Rubin and Zavalloni's study (1957) cited in Mohammed (1988) - words which epitomize the patriarchal power relationship and women's conformity to their 'normalised' role:

> I want to be a doctor, yet everything is against me.
> They think it is foolish that a girl should sacrifice
> so many years to study and then at the end of it she

gets married. And even if I decide to go ahead with
this idea there is the very real difficulty of finding
fees. My father has four children to provide for, two
of them boys who really need a good start in life.

This situation changed however, with developments in the
education system and economic expansion in Trinidad in the post-
independence era. The increased availability of free secondary
education for both rural and urban peoples of the nation
resulted in important changes to the Indo-Trinidadian community,
most of whom lived in rural Trinidad. Mohammed (1988) records
that the introduction of the Common Entrance Examination which
offered equal chances to boys as well as girls created major
differences within the patriarchal power relationship, in the
attitudes to the education of girls and attitudes to their later
employment out of the home. Changes began to take place within
the Indo-Trinidadian traditional setting, resulting in a
recognition of women's power within the family through their
wage earning capacity, women began to take more action in
dictating the direction of their own lives.

New developments in the economy in the seventies also
impacted on both Afro-and-Indo-Trinidadian women. As the
economy developed due to oil wealth, jobs were created in the
commercial, industrial, petroleum and public sectors which
resulted in a geographic shift of Indo-Trinidadian women from
the rural areas. Mohammed notes that many women joined the
teaching profession - a profession in which they were encouraged
as it was an extension of their nurturing role - a normalising
role assigned to women within the patriarchal power relations of
society. However, some university educated women entered other
professions such as the male dominated legal profession.
Women's economic contribution in the changing consumer society
was now viewed as important.

Accustomed to the old institutional power stereotype of the
passive and submissive female, Indo-Trinidadian men, reacted to

the growing confidence of their women (Mohammed 1988), and the changing power relations, in a confused and sometimes violent fashion. However, Carty (1988) and Reddock (1984) state that one feature of the European middle class notion of man/woman power relationship which slave women recognised in resisting it, was that marriage meant the virtual ownership of women by men. As she became his property, she was subject to his control which could even entail abuse.

Trinidadian men, regardless of ethnicity, often feel that they can only bolster their ego by asserting their dominance over women. This may be done physically through violence or emotionally as they try to constrain "their" women's freedom. Thus domestic violence was one of the major issues over which the Women's Movement of the 80s in Trinidad first organised.

Though many Indo-and-Afro-Trinidadian women have had the opportunity for economic independence and financial security, and they enjoy a great deal of freedom and independence they still exist in an atmosphere largely mediated by strong female/male and female/female patriarchal power within the home, the educational system and the labour force. This has strongly affected the attempts of women to organise into feminist organisations but it has not deterred women.

Education and Patriarchal Power

Education and the labour force are used as they are both indicators of women's social mobility and are highly regarded as status symbols within society. Since educational statistics in Trinidad are not recorded by race, or ethnicity this section analyses both Afro and Indo Trinidadians under the same heading.

Women in Trinidad like their men folk have long considered education as the avenue to upward social mobility. Though in recent years through their power of resistance some women have been able to break through the traditionally male dominated

professions and have gained increased economic independence,
these advances are not shared by the mass of women who still
operate in low paying, low status jobs (Tables III and IV).

The small commodity sector in Trinidad is dominated by
women, be they Afro or Indo Trinidadians, while the large
capitalist wage sectors are dominated by men. The education
system harbours sex segregation in the labour market. Despite
the equality of access to education instituted in the period of
the 60s, most boys and girls still pursue different paths
whether in academic or vocational training which prepares them,
as they have been socialised to accept by both the family and
the educational system - for allocation of certain types of jobs
according to their sex. Consider Table I - at post-secondary
level education, most men are enroled in the traditionally male
dominated fields such as engineering, while women are enroled in
the traditionally female dominated fields such as home economics
and secretarial courses, an extension of the type of tutoring
received at the secondary level.

Table I
Enrolment in Technical and Vocational Schools
by courses and sex (craft & technical courses)
1987/1988 (full time only)

Craft Courses	Male	Female
Business Education and Management		
Private Secretaries	-	14
Shorthand/typist	-	91
Electrical/Engineering		
Air Conditioning and Refrigeration	17	1
Domestic Electrical Servicing	25	-
Electrical Installation	37	-
Graphic and Applied Arts		
Bookbinding and Warehouse	4	11
Commercial Art	9	10
Jewellery	4	12
Letterpress Printing	1	7
Photolithography	8	13
Home Economics		
Practical Cafeteria Operations	2	20
Food Preparation	3	37
Tailoring	7	12
Land Surveying and Construction		
Cabinet Making	18	-
Construction, Carpentry and Joinery	37	3
TeleCommunications		
Telecommunication Technicians	46	-
Mechanical/Production Engineering		
Auto and Desel	109	2
General Maintenance Fitter	38	2
Instrument Maintenance	31	1
Machine Shop	74	1
Plumbing	13	-
Welding	55	2
Technical Courses		
Applied Sciences		
Process Plant Operators	2	2
Sciences Technicians	43	7
Business Education and Management		
Accounting Technicians	14	31
Business Management	30	83
Supervisory Management	44	23

Table I (Cont'd)

Enrolment in Technical and Vocational Schools
by courses and sex (craft & technical courses)
1987/1988 (full time only)

	Male	Female
Computer Studies		
Computer Programming	6	22
Electrical Engineering		
Electrical/Electronic/Engineering	130	-
Home Economics		
Home Economic Technicians	-	7
Land Surveying and Construction		
Building Technicians	41	2
Construction Technicians	36	5
Junior Builder Technicians	36	-
Mechanical/Production Engineering		
General Draughtsmanship Technicians	88	10
Instrument Maintenance Technicians	31	1
Mechanical Engineering Technicians	98	2

Source: Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
Central Statistical Office
Report on Education Statistics
1987/88 (p46-47)

Mohammed (1989) notes that education and economic opportunities were taken up avidly by women during the oil boom years from 1974 to 1981. She continues that, while more women may be found in certain fields and more men in others, the general rule which applies is that boys and girls, men and women are equally entitled to selection for entry into secondary, technical, vocational or university level education. But, it should be noted that, even though both men and women are entering the university system, men still dominate certain, fields of study such as Engineering and Medicine (Table II) and go on to dominate the better paying jobs (Table IV). While women dominate by far in the Faculties of Arts and Social Sciences this more often that not lead to lower paying jobs with few women breaking

through the power system and making it to the top.

The figures reveal that a reform in attitude is necessary - at the family level there is the need to make parents more conscious of sexist child-rearing practices -more difficult, however, is to convince them to change. In the schools a trend continues to teach boys and girls differently and to encourage them towards different areas, this too needs to be changed. Until the family, education and other institutions come to terms with their prejudices with regards to girls, women and men equal educational and job opportunities will continue to be a mockery.

Table II
Full time Admissions to
First Degrees 1989/90
St. Augustine

Faculty	Men	Women	Total
Agriculture	14	4	18
Arts and General Studies	33	75	108
Engineering	91	10	101
Law	11	16	27
Medical Sciences	52	31	83
Natural Sciences	84	99	183
Social Sciences	70	102	172

Source: The University of the West Indies
Statistics 1989/90
Table 19 (pp39-40)

Women are, however, resisting the patriarchal power system and not allowing domestic duties to deter them. During the 1989/90 period more women enroled in part-time university courses than men - part time first degrees enrolment revealed 236 women to 122 men; part-time certificates showed 115 women to 72 men and part-time diplomas were 157 women to 107 men (UWI Statistics 1989/90:p38-38). It cannot be denied, that women are taking advantage of the education system to resist the power stereotypes.

Labour Force and Patriarchal Power

In Trinidad there are no legal prohibitions on women working, they are free to earn an income and to be paid for the work done. Equal pay for equal work is the norm within the society, though female dominated jobs are ranked lower within the salary scale than those of men, and women are trained to the same extent. Mohammed (1989) notes, however, that a distinction can be made between those occupations and areas in which women are concentrated and those dominated by men. Women in Trinidad are still concentrated in the lower paid sectors such as clerical, sales and service jobs (Table III).

Reddock (1988) records that in the area of employment, the educational advances of women have done little to improve their position on the labour market, as women are still primarily engaged in 'Home Duties' and the informal sector or self employed traders or domestics. Even when women have gained access to the professions they hardly seem to make it to the top of the professions or the better paying jobs due to the patriarchal power relations, as well as familial "responsibilities". Consider Tables III and IV.

Table III
Selected Sections of
Labour Force with Jobs by Employment Status
Sex & Occupational Group 1989

Occupational Group	Males		Females	
	total lbr. force	% with jobs	total lbr. force	% with jobs
Professional Technical Related Worker	19,100	7.3%	21,200	15.9%
Administrative and Managerial Worker	8,500	3.4%	2,300	1.9%
Clerical and Related Worker	14,800	5.0%	38,000	24.3%
Craftsmen, Tradesmen and Production Process Worker (including mining & quarrying)	70,800	23.3%	14,600	9.0%
Worker in Transport Storage and Communication	24,100	8.7%	1,700	1.3%
Worker in Construction	50,800	10.5%	2,000	1.7%
All Other Occupational Groups (including sales and services)	81,900	27.0%	63,000	38.5%

Source: Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
Central Statistical Office
Labour Force Report 1989 (p34)

It should be noted that the labour force participation rate for women was 37.5% in 1989 compared with 75.4% for men. (The participation rate refers to the ratio of the economically active population to the total non-institutional population 15 years and over), ie twice as much men were involved in economic activity than women.

Table II reveals that the occupational group Professional Technical and Related Worker employs 15.9 percent women compared to 7.3 percent men. These statistics can be described as

inconclusive as the category is very broad and includes doctors, lawyers, surveyors, architects, laboratory assistants, teachers, economists etc. This category does not distinguish teachers from principals nor senior economist from research assistants. Thus even though there are more women they may be in the lower paying jobs as is reflected in Table IV under the same category of worker.

The Clerical and Related Worker category portrays that 24.3 percent women are employed compared to 5.0 percent of men, this can be seen as an extension of women's secondary and post secondary training which prepares women for the lower paying jobs. This group of worker invariably falls under the Administrative/Managerial category, the figures, however, reveal that there is a greater tendency for men to occupy the Administrative/Managerial posts and for women to occupy the Clerical related jobs i.e. looking at these two groups in isolation.

The occupational group of Craftsmen, Tradesmen, and Production Worker as well as the category of Construction worker are favourable to men reflecting an employment rate of 23.3 percent and 8.7 percent respectively, compared to women in this group the figures show 9.0 percent and 1.3 percent respectively a reflection of the educational statistics in Table I.

Finally the occupational group of sales and service worker seems to favour a high percentage of both men and women with a greater percentage of women (38.5 percent) employed.

Table IV
Average and Median Incomes of Persons
with Selected jobs by sex and Occupational Group-
1989

Occupational Group	Average Income		Median Income	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
Professional Technical Related Worker	3200	2500	3200	2700
Administrative/ Managerial Worker	3900	2900	4000	3000
Clerical and Related Worker	2200	1800	1900	1700
Craftsmen, Tradesmen and Production Process Worker (including mining and quarrying)	1600	800	1300	800
Worker in Transport, Storage and Communication	1500	1600	1300	1700
Worker in Construction	1300	1200	1200	1200
Sales Workers	1700	900	1200	700
Service Workers	1800	800	1700	700

Source: Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
Central Statistical Office
Labour Force Report (P129)

Table IV reveals that both the average and the median salary
of men in all occupational groups is higher than that of women
, except in the Worker in Transport, Storage and Communication
category. This can be explained from the point of view that
there are a larger portion of men in lower paying jobs in this
category (66%), than women (38%). Since more men are employed
than women the larger number of men depress the average. It does
not mean that women's salaries are in reality higher, as

statistics reveal that whereas 900 men are employed within the salary scale of $3000 and over no women are employed at this point of the scale. It is also interesting to note that though more women are employed in the highest category of the occupational group, - Professional, Technical and Related Worker (Table III), Table IV reveals that men are higher paid. The tables thus imply that men occupy the higher paid jobs in this broad category.

Consider table V and VI below of school principals as well as university lecturers - teaching a profession dominated by women at both primary and secondary school level - the profession into which most university educated women initially entered. Statistics show that at secondary school level there are 1,798 female teachers compared to 1,506 male teachers (CSO Report on Education Statistics, 1987/88), yet the positions of principals and vice principals are dominated by men. Table VI reveals that most of the well paying, prestigious positions of university lecturer are held by men even in the Faculties of Arts and Social Sciences where women's enrolment far surpasses that of men. Such situations would account for the lower percentage of women being employed at the highest occupational group (Table III), though in reality more women are qualified in this group. Hopefully such situations would be remedied soon through women's continuous resistance.

Table V
Secondary School Principals and Vice Principals

	Total	Females
Principals	99	24
Vice Principals	124	32

Table V cont'd

Primary School Principals and Vice Principals

	Total	Females
Principals	449	144
Vice Principals	287	49

Technical Vocational Schools
Principals and Vice Principals

	Total	Females
Principals	2	-
Vice Principals	2	-

Table VI
Distribution of Full-time Staff by
Faculty, Category, Sex
U.W.I., St. Augustine
(as of November 1, 1989)

Faculty	Profs.		Snr. Lect.		All Categ.	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
Arts & General Studies	3	-	10	4	17	8
Education	1		2	-	9	9
Engineering	9	-	18	-	64	3
Medical Clinic	15	-	14	-	46	3
Natural Sciences	4	-	14	-	37	5
Social Sciences	2	1	10	2	21	8

Source: The University of the West Indies
Statistics 1989/1990
Table 34

Looking at the hierarchy of the education system which
is not very different from that of any other formal working
sector, it can be seen that women do not make it to the top
of the pyramid in spite of their free and easy access to

education.   The manager of a radio station (male) in
Trinidad has stated that the society at large has a
resistance to women as managers - a statement that can
find support in the fact that many men and women often
proclaim that they do not like working with women bosses.
An investigation of women in the media (Sunday Express,
March 1991,p17) a once male dominated profession reveals
that 46 percent of reporters, editors, graphic artists and
photographers in newspapers, television and radio are
women.   They also make up 80 percent of the students in the
Mass Communication degree programme at The University of
the West Indies, Mona, yet few women occupy top positions
in the media.

One radio station manager has stated that few men want
to be journalist any more, men are going after the better-
paying jobs with higher status - in business, science and
technology, as the higher paying jobs in such fields are
readily available to men.

It can be safely said that education is not the
only or main key to women's emancipation, but also greater
structural, attitudinal, institutional and power changes
which entails not only the state but also trade unions and
other organisations, as well as the continuing struggle of
women themselves to influence the direction, decisions and
power relations of institutions and the state.

Conclusion

Women in Trinidad wished to and have made the effort
to participate fully in the economic and social development
of society, however, the power relationship as it exists
has dictated the extent of their participation, so that the
majority of women who have been able to break through the
system never make it to the top of the pyramid.

Though women make up more than half of the population and have always been self supporting, the patriarchal power relation within institutions such as the education system and the labour force relegates them to a subordinate position. The education statistics reveal that even though equal educational opportunities are available to both males and females – at the post secondary level males still dominate the traditionally male dominant fields which qualify them for the better paying jobs.

Women, however, have not/are not standing idly by, they continue to struggle against and to resist the power systems which are investigated in the following chapter on feminism.

Chapter 4

The Women's Movement

Introduction

Women's resistance within the patriarchal power system has resulted in the mode of feminism within Trinidad as it exists today. This chapter explores the issues which have been discussed and debated and interest women during the period of the 1970s to the present day. Before going into the issues the paper seeks to place feminism within a Caribbean context.

What is feminism?

To most people (men and women), particularly those unfamiliar with the politics of feminism – feminism is enigmatic. Indeed, feminism has been defined and re-defined as diverse, different and specific. It is a fact that feminists differ among themselves – there being different orientations and theoretical emphases between socialist and radical feminists, black and third world feminists as well as the lesbian feminists. Thus some speak of a plurality of feminisms.

Because of this plurality, it would be difficult to come up with a list of beliefs, principles or demands, that can be applied to feminists worldwide. A glimpse of some of the varying views of western feminists include definitions such as Evans (1977:39), who states that feminism is the doctrine of equal rights for women, based on the theory of the equality of the sexes. Lerner (1971) sees feminism as any struggle that is designed to elevate women's status, socially, politically, economically and in respect to their self concepts. Delmar (1986) states that a feminist is someone who holds that women

suffer discrimination because of their sex, that they have specific needs which remain negated and unsatisfied and that the satisfaction of these needs require a radical change in the social, economic and political order. Gunew (1990:24) sees feminism as a mode of analysis, a method of approaching life and politics, rather than a set of political conclusions about the oppression of women. Such views have influenced and would most likely continue to influence the notion of Caribbean feminism.

Feminism in the Caribbean context is also defined in varying ways - for Tina Johnson it is seen as a transformation of society for both sexes, rather than a separate struggle; for another, feminism is seen as a struggle towards changing the subordinate and oppressive position of women as well as coming to terms with one's sexuality; Rhoda Reddock sees feminism as one of the most revolutionary movements that exist, challenging that most fundamental of all human relationships - the relationships between women and men which to some extent characterise and reproduce other exploitative relations in the society; for Lucille Mair feminism in the Caribbean is also seen as being akin to the liberation of women's energy, resources, skills, and talents. Liberation is another word for emancipation another crucial word in Caribbean history (Sistren,1989:19-24).

Feminism in this analysis, is seen not as men versus women, nor of women taking over the roles of men. Feminism is rather a recognition of the dormant power within women and women taking the necessary action to make that power active, recognising their capabilities and the importance of their participation and resistance for the elimination of the subordination of women. Feminism also entails using this activism, to bring about positive changes, within institutions and eventually the whole society for the benefit of all.

Early Women's Movement in Trinidad

The women's movement in Trinidad is recorded as having its

beginnings in the early 20th century. Women at that time mainly organised within the women's arms of trade unions, and political parties, being very active in roles related to their domestic role, they also participated in marches and gave other forms of support when necessary. The women's movement has experienced many changes since then being influenced by the changing class positions of women as well as the changing socio-economic and political climate.

Today many women's organisations have a feminist bias and as demands have changed, they appear much more radical in their resistance to the patriarchal power which prevails within the society. It is these movements which are referred to when referring to the new women's movement.

The New Women's Movement in Trinidad

The re-emergence of the women's movement internationally, followed later by the global focus given to women by the declaration of the United Nations Decade for Women (1975-1985) created an awareness and a new era in the women's movement in Trinidad. This impact has been able to touch many aspects of women's and men's lives - aspects the earlier movement would not have dreamed of putting into focus.

The Period of the 1970s - Feminist Action

One of the earliest recorded of the new, short-lived women's organisations to be formed in Trinidad in 1975 was the Housewife's Association of Trinidad and Tobago (HATT). This movement was mainly concerned with consumer issues (monitoring increasing food prices), and so organised women around the need for the regulation of food prices and other consumer goods. This issue did not seem to hold many women's interest and so the small group disintegrated, but women's interest in organising to bring about changes in their subordinate position within the society had been stirred.

The 1970s also saw the formation of the National Commission on the Status of Women. The Commission (Reddock'1988:500) was a voluntary commission comprising 39 men and women from various government departments and non-governmental organisations. The commission undertook an investigation and published data on (Mohammed 1989) women's participation in political life, their legal status, access to education, employment opportunities and conditions of employment, the availability of health and welfare services and the influence of scientific and technological developments on women among other issues.

At the end of its investigation an evaluation of the status of women in Trinidad and Tobago including recommendations were forwarded to the government in 1978.

Mohammed records that this commission helped to legitimise concern about the status of women in all spheres, among the more conservative members and institutions within the society who would have easily dismissed the issues, if the queries were done by women's groups. Thus the door for feminist action was opened.

The Period of the 1980s - Feminist Action

The 1980s saw an upsurge of small radical feminist oriented women's organisations, consisting of a new breed of verbal working class women, and female intellectuals who were able to identify and analyze sites of struggle within the patriarchal power relationships of men and women. The **Concerned Women for Progress (CWP)** was the first such group to emerge in 1980, this group attempted to organise working women in various working class communities and participated in solidarity causes for the working class. Public forums were then first held on the issue of sexual violence.

The Group was formed in 1983 and **Workingwomen** later. Both groups continued the struggle against sexual violence and added

the issue of domestic violence. The latter organisation focused on other topical issues such as free trade zones and the economy showing solidarity with other movements when necessary. The activities of these small feminist organisations were successfully centred around consciousness raising of both men and women, through information on the manifestation and origins of female oppression in society, as well as speaking out against all forms of violence and sexual discrimination against women.

The impact of these small voluntary organisations has far surpassed their size as they have highlighted issues which are of relevance to all women regardless of class, age or ethnicity - one such issue which epitomizes the patriarchal power relationship is sexual violence which can be characterised as, battering, rape, incest, sexual harassment, fear of rape or even disrespect of women in all forms. Besides being of relevance to women, the issue has been projected as an issue which affects men as well and so men too have been targeted as supporters in the eradication of violence against women.

The feminist women's movement saw that struggle and change is a possibility, as because of their resistance through demonstrations, open forums, letters of protest and the aggression which the movement provoked, the movement has opened up a space for dialogue and change. In this realization I can see what Foucault said about power and resistance as important, (Foucault, 1989 in Dubois 1991:110), "... resistance is an equally significant form of power, not only because 'power relations' open up a space in the middle of which the struggles develop, but also because of the function of the specific intellectual, in deciphering a layer of reality in such a way that the lines of force and the line of fragility come forth, the points of resistance and the points of attack, the paths marked out and the short cuts".

Between 1982 and 1983 there was even greater emphasis on the issue of sexual violence - a seminar on rape was organised by a

group of professional women as well as a television series in which doctors, lawyers, journalist and the police participated. The willingness of these professionals to participate (Mohammed 1988), highlighted the issue of sexual violence and the work of the feminist women's movement.

By 1984 the first rape crisis centre was functioning with the support of the Caribbean Conference of Churches. Mohammed (1989) records that being based at the Catholic Centre helped reinforce religious disapproval of sexual violence, thus widening the network of support. The focus on rape was followed by attention being paid to other forms of sexual abuse and eventually encouraged the provision of shelters for abused women.

The period of the 1980s also saw the introduction of the interdisciplinary course **Women in Development Studies** at The University of the West Indies. This was achieved after approximately three years of patriarchal power struggles at the male dominated campus (Table V). According to Carty (1988:p152), "institutional support was not easily attained from The University of the West Indies, not only because of the unfounded fear of scholastic mediocrity, but in fact the perceived threats to the status quo".

The **Women Studies Group** which initiated the introduction of the program was not to be easily defeated and so they used their power of resistance as they held on to the struggle, which resulted in the implementation of the Program at The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine in 1986. An important achievement for the direction of the women's movement and feminism.

One of the greatest achievements of the movement in the 1980s was its ability to mobilise the nation over the Sexual Offenses Bill (Clause 4). The Bill which brought all crimes related to sexual offenses under one heading and so created a criminal offense of marital rape was initially thrown out of

parliament when first introduced. However, a well informed and by now fairly conscious female public made their objections heard, and debate on the bill was reopened. A Sexual Offenses Bill Action Committee was also formed, which comprised numerous women's organisations (Feminist and non-feminist), and representatives from various unions. As debate on the bill proceeded women of the political party in power also voiced their opinion through a sit-in, in parliament. This united action was the reason for the re-introduction of the Clause which became law. The network of women's power came into fore which according to Foucault, operates everywhere and can therefore be strategically resisted anywhere.

Women in Trinidad united across class, ethnic and political differences to demand their rights. While the women's movement had made a great impact on the male/female population of Trinidad, through the sexual violence bill, other issues did not have the same amount of support as that of sexual violence, one such issue was that of the declining Trinidad economy.

The women's movement has from its inception tried to conscientise and inform women about the economy, an issue which gained more and more importance as the Trinidad and Tobago economy faced decline.

In 1988 Trinidad and Tobago became a victim of the IMF/World Bank Structural Adjustment policies and between 1988 and 1989 the country's currency was devalued, resulting in increased prices for commodities, wage freezes have been implemented, in both the private and the public sectors which make it impossible to cope with the rapidly increasing cost of living. Henry (1989) in a poverty survey stated that the difficult fiscal situation has reduced the standard of living of women in the lower strata.

In March 1989 based on the economic policies put forward in the budget, the women's organisation, **Workingwomen**, marked International Women's Day with a two part forum entitled -

Women's Consultation on the Economy. This was done not only to inform the nation and women in particular on the direction of the economy, but also to raise the consciousness of women and to encourage them to use their power of resistance to influence the direction of the nation. This forum, however, was poorly attended.

In May 1989 another attempt was made to organise women around the issue of the economy - a public forum was held to discuss the governments plan to introduce Free Trade Zone investors into the country. At this forum information was given out and a set of guidelines for companies which would operate in these zones were put forward. This forum was poorly attended, particularly by the women to whom it was targeted, however the issue together with the movement's resistance received media coverage and encouraged some parliament debate.

The failure of women to fully support economic issues in the 1980s does not mean that women are not interested in the economy, but women are probably still sceptical of the feminist women's movement and did not see the direction of the economy or the country as a women's issue as the patriarchal power structure dictates the economy as a male issue.

The Early 1990s - Feminist Action

The issue of the economy continued to be most crucial in the year 1990. This period saw the introduction of a 15% Value Added Tax (VAT) on all items as well as much labour unrest, an indirect effect of the governments structural adjustment policies - teachers were on work to rule and strikes at intervals, nurses and doctors were also on work to rule to protest against the decline in the health facilities and lack of drugs and other facilities at the public hospitals, due to budgetary cuts. Those mostly affected by the declining economy as any economist would point out have been the working class, women and children, and the poor, as often they are made to bear the burden in their

quest for survival.

The women's movement continues to protest against the government's economic policies and tries to make women and men aware of the need to take serious interest in the issue, still to little avail. In February 1991, representatives of women's organisations were invited to and attended an Economic Conference of the Caribbean Heads of Governments, held in Trinidad and Tobago. This was a small recognition on the part of the government of the importance of women's input into the economy and the direction of the country at large.

However, the issue of Domestic Violence continues to lead the way in the 1990s, again grabbing media headlines and the attention of all. In early 1991 much senate debate took place over the Domestic Violence Bill, which eventually became law.

The legislation has in fact created nothing new but has allowed the term 'domestic violence' to be merely descriptive of the many criminal acts of violence which may occur between spouses.   .... Of utmost importance is the fact that the provisions of the Bill seek not so much to punish the offender but to prevent the occurrence of the offence in the first place (Domestic Violence Bill:p2).

The Bill caused much controversy and had the full attention of the media and the public at large. Twenty-one women's organisations (feminist and non-feminist) came together to support this bill which faced many negative and positive remarks from the men in parliament both in the government and the opposition. However, it cannot be denied that the support of the male dominated parliament resulted in the passing of the bill.

The Bill which was pointed out to be gender-neutral was especially welcomed by the women of the country, who along with their children are more likely than men to be the victims of domestic violence. The bill made domestic violence not just a private family affair, but moreso a public crime against civil society.

This new law, and the support, as well as the resistance it received, reflects the positive gains that the feminist women's organisations have made, indeed it reflects the gains that women in Trinidad have made in challenging the power relations between men and women, as it cannot be denied that men use violence against women to show their superior power. The law definitely reflects a conscious society (to some extent), as such a bill would have experienced much greater difficulty twenty years ago, in fact it may not have even been considered. If we recall twenty years ago, the main issue of the women's movement in Trinidad was one of women as consumers.

It must be admitted, however, that the law that now deals with domestic violence is not a perfect one, as it has gone through some dilution during the debate, as much give and take took place in the power/resistance relationship, but nonetheless, it is no doubt that a major step has been taken on behalf of women and children in Trinidad.

Other Women's Organisations

Though there are many women's organisations in Trinidad few would claim to be feminist oriented i.e. paying particular attention to, voicing their opinions, and struggling for the elimination of the subordination of women. The socio-cultural environment is controlled by a form of patriarchal power which seeks to inhibit the notion of feminism and so while many women's groups such as church groups, Soroptomists and even the Business and Professional Women's Organisation (which manages a home for abused women), recognise women's oppression and subordination and even supported the feminist women's organisations on the domestic and sexual violence bills, they would refrain from defining themselves or their actions as feminist.

Indeed in spite of the gains of the feminist women's organisations, to be known as a feminist in Trinidad, is to

expect a variety of negative labels from both men and women, as there are still many myths which surround feminism.

Conclusion

In defining feminism the chapter investigated what the term means to various western feminists and what it means for Caribbean feminists, paying attention to some of the gains and failures of the women's movement in Trinidad from the period of 1975 to the present.

Chapter 5
The Impact of Feminism

The new women's movement has been in existence in Trinidad for approximately fifteen years and has had some impact or effect and influence on the populace; though it must be admitted that the face of feminism is still seen by many as a serious threat to "traditional" values. Before venturing further, it is necessary to explain what I mean by impact. In this section the term impact refers to the indirect effects of feminism, not to the achievements made through the work of the women's movement, which have already been dealt with in the previous chapter.

It cannot be denied, that female solidarity, has a tremendous social impact - it gets things done. Pressure from the feminist women's movement forced government to re-examine their assumptions about women. Pressure from feminist women's movement and from sympathetic men has initiated changes in laws governing women's rights - divorce, domestic violence, sexual violence, and inheritance laws.

The power of some women in Trinidad to come together and organise under the umbrella of feminism is indeed a great achievement and that in itself has had its impact on society. The first recorded 'new' movement in the 1970s the Housewives Association of Trinidad and Tobago (HATT) left its impact by re-opening the way to resistance and for new radical movements to emerge.

The effects of these new movements can be seen mostly in issues with which the movement dealt. Its full impact, however, cannot be easily measured as it has been in intangible ways. Here I investigate the indirect effects of feminism on:

1. The media as it is believed that this institution has the power to make or break any social movement.
2. The state which is seen as being necessary to the

implementation of positive changes on behalf of women and the wider society.

3.   **Women** who are the main actors and the centre of focus of feminism.

4.   **Men** as changes in women's lives must eventually affect the lives of men and cause a reaction, it is recognised that men in Trinidad are not the enemy but are also victims of the system.

The Impact of Feminism on the Media

The feminist women's movement has indeed made its impact on the media in both positive and negative ways from its inception. Mohammed (1990) records that in 1982 when the women's movement picketed a major beauty show, the protestors were then described as a "bunch of frustrated lesbians", and the article went on to suggest that the women were jealous of the women on parade. In contrast, however, in October 1990, the last day of a meeting of the Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action (CAFRA), held in Trinidad, the newspapers headline read, "Women of action talk this weekend", the article proceeded to praise the work of the women involved and went on to pledge their support to the women, some of whom were referred to as "frustrated lesbians" in 1982.

Though constrained by the concerns of business and male managers Mohammed, (1989) notes that female journalists and media workers have displayed a greater sensitivity over the last few years when reporting the issues concerning women and this has had far reaching results. She continues that in 1983 a female journalist investigated the salary and working conditions of flight attendants, (mainly females), compared to that of pilots (mainly males), and the resulting debate carried on through the media caused such a spin off effect that other issues related to women's work came into the society's focus.

As media personnel become more and more enlightened, the feminist women's movement should be able to expect not just more

coverage, but also more positive coverage from the media. Encouraged by one of the members of the most influential Caribbean Feminist Organisation (CAFRA), to give a feminist perspective on each issue covered, whether sports or the economy, one young female reporter replied, "if we don't do it, the men certainly won't"(Sunday Express, March 17, 1991:p17).

The Impact of Feminism on the State

In 1975 International Women's Year initiated and opened the door for the exercise of examining the law of Trinidad to discover whether women received equal and fair treatment. A conscious effort has been made since then to consider the effect of legislation upon women and to remove lingering discriminatory provisions.

Through its power struggles with the Sexual Offenses Bill in the 1980s and the Domestic Violence Bill in 1991, the women's movement has been able to make its greatest impact on the state, by engaging the support of the majority of men in parliament as they argued in favour of the bills. The constant struggles of resistance of the movement for improvement in the status of women have proven to the state that the movement is a force with which to reckon and would not be silenced while there exist anomalies within the law.

The movement has also proven to the state that it can use its power of resistance to bring about change and to mobilise not only the women of the country but men as well, as occurred during the domestic and sexual violence bills.

Indirectly, through the work of the feminist movement more emphasis has been placed on equal educational opportunities for boys and girls particularly in the sphere of vocational education and so more males feel at ease to enter female dominated courses and females feel empowered to enter any male dominated course.

Another indirect effect of feminism and the work of the women's movement is that more women are being offered visible positions in political parties, as well as positions as chairpersons of influential boards. Because of feminism, these women feel more empowered to accept these positions which were previously totally male dominated.

The Impact of Feminism on Women

Numbers are not important here but rather the changes that have taken place over the decade. The most significant impact of feminism has been its ability to create a breed of articulate women willing to speak out and fight for the rights of women at times through much self sacrifice. This new struggle resulted in women coming together in groups and organisations to challenge the patriarchal power relations within institutions and society. Women's self confidence received a needed booster.

With the support and consciousness raising of the women's movement and the whole notion of feminism, women felt empowered to move forward and take advantage of the education system and this resulted in an increase in the number of women at the University. In 1948 out of 33 students 10 were women, in 1962, the period of Independence, out of 1,422 students 468 were women. The number of women continually increased since then until they surpassed men in 1982 and today reflects 6,777 women out of a student population of 12,180 (The University of the West Indies Statistics 1989/90:p1).

However, it must be recognised that the period of the oil boom (1975-1982) would have had its effects on the changing status of women. Because of the 'new' wealth women could now afford to attend university, thus it can safely be said that the oil boom, coupled with the politics of feminism have resulted in an increase in the number of women attending the university.

Women have also moved away from the traditional 'female'

occupations and have taken up careers. During the period of the eighties, female plumbers, electricians and taxi drivers became very visible, and women continue to move into male dominated fields with much ease, though the figures may not always reflect it - women in Trinidad are lawyers, doctors, journalist, in fact women can be found in all fields which were once male dominated, as women have been and continue to be influenced and motivated by the women's movement and the notion of feminism.

Again, however, it can be said that the increased oil wealth created job opportunities which women were ready, willing and capable of filling. Accustomed to working alongside men on the sugar estates - women entered male-dominated occupations with ease.

The gains of the women's movement have created a general trend towards support for women's rights. As university educated and other conscious women began to participate in public activities previously reserved for men, they encountered much sexual discrimination as the bulk of higher status authoritative positions meted out went to men. Thus women, especially middle class women, felt that the women's movement was relevant to their lives after all and so there arose increased support for the movement.

Of course if women are asked whether feminism or the women's movement has had any impact on their career and educational opportunities or choices, many women would deny it, as many women are not fully conscious of the many power struggles of feminists and the impact these struggles have had and are having on their lives.

There is probably no aspect of women's lives that is not profoundly affected by society's as well as women's own view of feminism and men's increased insecurity; women in Trinidad are being unconsciously pressured through the patriarchal power relationship to be feminine by not being too competitive and

career oriented. Women, nonetheless, are resisting the patriarchal power system and are slowly moving into careers and, so evading the stereotypical norms.

Women who sought their own identities and attempted to execute them in the absence of male support have been around in Trinidad for a long time. Their presence, however, goes largely unrecorded, except by word of mouth, women were, in those periods confronting daily issues of survival and it is those same women who have produced the generations of conscious feminists that are around today to continue the struggle. Women in Trinidad even though they found themselves controlled by what Foucault refers to as "dominant forces", such as the state, they, contrary to Foucault's theory were not/are not "docile", but rather found ways of resistance even at the risk of their lives or through great sacrifice.

Today, however, not all women share the view that flexibility and change are positive and growth enhancing. Many women feel threatened by the shifts in the female role and have responded by rejecting the notion of feminism totally and so keep themselves apart from the struggle. This is most evident in the small numbers of women who participate in International Women's Day marches every year. In fact the main participants at the march are usually members of the women's movements. Though many women supported the domestic and sexual violence bills, many women still remain unsure and inactive.

One woman occupying a middle management position, after reading a 1990 Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action (CAFRA) magazine at her office commented on how much she enjoyed the articles, but went on to say that she could not take such a magazine to her home as her husband would object when he saw the word "feminist" on the cover of the magazine. She wondered whether the name of the magazine could not be changed, to exclude the word "feminist".

Another woman after attending a forum on the economy, hosted by the feminist women's organisation **Workingwomen** in 1989, reported that she found the whole experience rather enriching, but went on to state that she could not join the organisation as her husband would not approve, since he believes that "feminist" women's organisations, "put things in women's heads". The same woman is, however, very active in church organisations, no doubt with her husbands approval.

It cannot, however, be denied that women are changing gradually. Men are changing also, gradually. As flexibility becomes more acceptable and more common place than rigidity, everyone should be able to find his or her own way to deal with the gender-role issues. The important thing is for each woman to have the freedom and the opportunity to decide for herself without fear of social rejection and stigma. To change from a rigid adherence to femininity to a rigid avoidance of femineity is not the point. The point is to permit greater flexibility and hence greater fulfilment.

The Impact of Feminism on Men

No real structural change can occur among women alone, the focus has in Trinidad broadened to include the situation of men and the question of men's emancipation. The aim is not for a male or female role, but for a basically human role.

Although some men (and women), may object to the label "feminist", and fear the notion of feminism, there are indicators that they are becoming more responsive to the issues raised by the women's movement, to upgrade women's status in society and to the specific strategies of the women's movement. This has been most evidenced in the support received from the male dominated parliament in the passing of the domestic and sexual violence bills. Bills which are very important to enhancing the attitudes of women to themselves as well as the attitudes of men towards women's bodies and women's rights.

As women voice their disapproval and highlight the problems which they face, men become more defensive as, "they perceive this assertiveness as a diminution of traditional male domination and they are not quite ready to let go of old modalities" (Lewis 1990:p107). These men need support and understanding not antagonism nor aggression, as it is only natural for men to want to hold on to their privileged positions and to be defensive. Changes are taking place within society and women's lives, for which men have not been prepared and these changes are, at times, uncomfortable and too much for men to handle.

Male emancipation, however, has already touched some young men and it is interesting to observe how it has been absorbed, as society begins more to move in a direction in which it will not be demeaning to the men to do housework or child care. Increasingly in Trinidad, men seem to be taking on child care and the practical and emotional responsibility of bringing up children - but as stated earlier men feel left out of the politics of feminism, and they do not want to be marginalised, thus some men hit back from their positions of power, which often results in heavy criticisms of the women's movement, while others seek ways to understand.

Many men want to understand the notion of feminism but they seem not to feel that they are welcome at forums organised by the women's movement, even when they are invited. As the women's movement forges ahead, attention should be paid to the effects of feminism on men, as it is important to have the support of men for positive development to take place which would benefit all.

Conclusion

Before concluding I wish to summarise the main points of the paper. The paper sought to investigate patriarchal power, and women's resistance through the politics of feminism and its impact on Trinidad paying particular attention to the changing

roles of women. The paper first paid attention to the socio-
economic roles of women as well as the male dominated power
relationship during the periods of slavery and indentureship,
when women worked alongside their male counterparts in the fields
doing the same amount of work as the men.

Educational opportunities and the changing economic system
during the colonial period, as well as the post-independence era,
which began in 1962, were also investigated as secondary
education opened up various possibilities for jobs such as
teaching, the civil service and journalism resulting in the
beginning of what Brereton refers to as, "a sort of upper-working-
class" (1981).

During the period of the 1970s and the 1980s many social and
economic changes occurred within the society and educational and
economic opportunities were taken advantage of by many women
during this period impacting on women's continuing changing
roles.

In examining women's changing roles, the paper also examined
the patriarchal power relationship within society which
continually seeks to subordinate women as it tries to dictate the
extent of women's participation within society. Patriarchal
power is defined in chapter two as the attempts of men and women
in society to function within and influence the institutions
within society, to keep the stereotypical norms which seek to
confine men to one role which often entails domination and women
to another which places them in a position of subordination in
an attempt to dictate change and to control resistance, hence
keeping a "normalised" society.

However, women today, like those before them continue to use
their power of resistance - initially the Afro-Trinidadian women
showed resistance by refusing to have babies during the period
of slavery, babies that would be taken away from them and sold,
and Indo-Trinidadian women showed their resistance by initially

refusing to allow themselves to be subordinated by their male counterparts. Today women show their resistance to the patriarchal power relationship through the linkages made under the umbrella of feminism and the work of the women's movement.

In examining women's power of resistance through feminism, Caribbean feminism is defined and the work of the feminist women's organisations in Trinidad is highlighted from the period of 1975 to the present, paying particular attention to the issues which received not only women's support, but moreso the support of the wider society.

The paper finally examined the impact of feminism on Trinidad, paying attention to the gains of women as well as those of the wider society, recognising that the gains cannot be easily measured as they have been in intangible ways.

Since the media can either make or break any political movement, this institution is highlighted – a media which was once anti-feminism and the notion of a feminist women's movement in Trinidad, which today pledges its support. Some of the changes in state legislation are also looked at as for successful and meaningful struggles which would impact positively on women and eventually the society to take place the support of and changes within state legislation are necessary. Most importantly, the impact of feminism on women has been highlighted, paying attention to women's changing status in the education system and the labour force as well as women's attitudes to and awareness of feminism and the women's movement. Changes in women's life styles also affect that of men and so the role of and attitudes of men are also investigated.

There exist a long history of women's resistance in Trinidad. However, women are not a homogenous group and so not all women have resisted the patriarchal power system, nor today share the views and visions of the women's movement. Some women are comfortable with the power system as it operates.

The present status of women in the labour market, the educational system and society as a whole is the result of a long process of interaction between the system of patriarchal power and women's resistance.

The question is how does the patriarchal power system operate? The answer is, that it influences the education system and the labour force, as it seeks to keep certain structures in place. However, in Trinidad women are resisting the patriarchal power system by not allowing domestic duties to deter them, educational statistics reveal that more women are enroling for part-time courses at the university. Women are also present at all levels of the labour force even though in small numbers.

The "new" women's movement in Trinidad has identified various sights of women's oppression and have sought to deal with issues surrounding this oppression. The movement took its power of resistance to a new sphere when the law got involved and women's resistance reached the wider public arena through the domestic and sexual violence bills. At this juncture, for the women's movement in Trinidad there is no turning back.

There are still many challenges for the movement. One of the first is for dialogue with educators, trainers, teachers and those in contact with the younger generation, to help them put forward correct information with regards to the patriarchal power relationship and the notion of feminism, so that young men and women would be aware of the work and direction of the movement. In this light feminist issues should be discussed in a co-educational environment.

Another challenge of the movement is the need to lobby for curriculum change, so that sex-stereotyping images are removed from all school text. The Draft Plan for Educational Development in Trinidad and Tobago, 1968-1983 (Harvey 1988:p345) states that

in education we deal always with a rapidly changing social setting in which education has to be both the foundation and catalyst of change.

Part of the transitions of the women's movement has been effected by the media which has been instrumental in the direction of the movement. The challenge of the movement is to tap the resources of the media as a means of communicating with the wider society.

The women's movement in Trinidad has indeed made strides as it has successfully challenged some of the deeply engrained habits within the patriarchal power relation. However, there is still much to be done and it will entail many more power/resistance struggles. The movement should be cognizant of the effects of their progress on women and men and should seek as far as possible to include men on their agenda. The movement needs the support of men and the wider population of women for positive change and development to take place within Trinidad society.

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