

POLITICS, POWER + GENDER JUSTICE IN THE ANGLOPHONE CARIBBEAN



Women's Understandings of Politics, Experiences of Political
Contestation and the Possibilities for Gender Transformation

Research Team: Principal Investigator: Gabrielle Jamela Hosein;
Lead Researcher: Jane Parpart; Project Coordinator: Tisha Nickenig



IGDS
INSTITUTE FOR GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT STUDIES
ST. AUGUSTINE UNIT

IDRC 
International Development
Research Centre

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Centre de recherches pour le
développement international

Canada

IDRC Research Report 106430-001

MASCULINITIES AND THE PRACTICE OF DOMINICA'S NATIONAL GENDER POLICY

By Ramona Biholar¹

¹ **Citation:** Biholar, Ramona. "Masulinities and the Practice of Dominica's National Gender Policy." In **Politics, Power and Gender Justice in the Anglophone Caribbean: Women's Understandings of Politics, Experiences of Political Contestation and the Possibilities for Gender Transformation IDRC Research Report 106430-001**, by Principal Investigator Gabrielle Jamela Hosein and Lead Researcher Jane Parpart. Ottawa, ON Canada: International Development Research Centre, 2014.

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List of Acronyms

BGA--- Bureau of Gender Affairs

CariMAN--- Caribbean Male Action Network

CEDAW---Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

CDB---Caribbean Development Bank

CIWIL---Caribbean Institute for Women in Leadership

DACAMEN---Dominica Association of Catholic Men

DNGP---Dominica National Gender Policy

DNCW---Dominica National Council of Women

FGD---Focus Group Discussion

GIS---Government Information Service

GFP---Gender Focal Point

GOCD---Government of the Commonwealth of Dominica

IDRC---International Development Research Centre

IGDS---Institute for Gender and Development Studies

MOE---Ministry of Education

PS---Permanent Secretary

UWI---The University of the West Indies

UNWOMEN---United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

Preface

This chapter is one of several outputs of a research project undertaken between 2011 and 2014 by the Institute for Gender and Development Studies (IGDS) at the University of West Indies (UWI), St. Augustine campus. Titled *Politics, Power and Gender Justice in the Anglophone Caribbean: Women's Understandings of Politics, Experiences of Political Contestation and the Possibilities for Gender Transformation*, the project was spearheaded by IGDS in partnership with the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and led by Principal Investigator, Gabrielle Jamela Hosein, with the support of Lead Researcher, Jane Parpart.

Additional technical feedback was provided by Project Advisory Team members including Rawwida Baksh, Eudine Barriteau, Cynthia Barrow-Giles, Patricia Mohammed, and Linnette Vassell. Feedback and support from Francisco Con-Montiel, from the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), also contributed to the project outputs. Support from the staff at IGDS, St. Augustine, and especially Tisha Nickenig for project coordination and management, and Kathryn Chan for graphic design and layout, deserve particular recognition.

The project examined four strategies to promote democratic governance, women's rights and gender equality in the Anglophone Caribbean. First, women's political leadership was explored for the extent to which it creates greater governmental will and capacity to more actively and effectively transform gender relations both within and outside of the state. Second, quota systems were assessed for their impact on effective women's participation and leadership in representative government. Third, the usefulness of national gender policy documents for promoting gender equality was evaluated. Finally, the impact of feminist movement building on women's capacity to be effective transformational leaders within democratic political life was investigated.

Each of these strategies has expanded the spaces for realizing women's rights and gender equality, created greater capacity (among women and men) to achieve transformed gender relations, and shifted the gender ideologies that present resistances to women's effective political participation and leadership. Together, they reflect a core set of historical struggles waged across the Anglophone Caribbean. This project therefore sought to document the history of struggle in five Caribbean nations. It focused on specific countries where these struggles appear to have been

won. Trinidad and Tobago provided an appropriate case study for examining the impact of women's contemporary political leadership, Guyana for exploring the impact of quota systems, Dominica and Jamaica for exploring the formulation and impact of national gender policies, and the Caribbean Institute for Women in Leadership (CIWiL) for evaluating the impact of feminist advocacy on women's rights, effectiveness and representation in democratic governance in St. Lucia. These cases thus investigate four global strategies for advancing democratic governance, women's rights and gender equality. They offer insights into transnational, regional and national alliances between states, international organizations, NGOs and feminist movements, and demonstrate the relevance of national case studies for understanding regional and global experiences. Indeed, the project's comparative, historical and case study approach shows that both regional and national case studies are essential if we are to understand how democracy, the state and politics offer opportunities for and resistances to renegotiating gender relations in different twenty-first century contexts. For a more comprehensive summary of the project's conceptual framework, methodologies and findings please refer to the Introduction by Gabrielle Jamela Hosein and Jane Parpart, available at IDRC and IGDS, UWI, St. Augustine. The following is a list of related chapters produced by the project:

- "Women's Political Leadership in Trinidad and Tobago, Understandings, Experiences and Negotiations" by Aleah N. Ranjitsingh
- "Getting to One-Third? Creating Legislative Access for Women to Political Space in Guyana" by Natalie Persadie
- "Feminist/Womanist Advocacy Toward Transformational Leadership in the Anglophone Caribbean: The Interplay of Individual and Collective Agency" by Shirley Campbell;
- "National Gender Policies in the English Speaking Caribbean" by Deborah McFee;
- "The Patriarchal State and the Development of Gender Policy in Jamaica" by Maziki Thame and Dhanaraj Thakur
- "Crossing over the Barriers: A Historical Journey of Women's Political Leadership in the Anglophone Caribbean" by Beverly Shirley;
- "Advancing Gender Justice? The Opportunities, Resistances, and Limitations of Guyana's Quota System" by Iman Khan
- "Enactments, Contestations, and Possibilities of Women's Transformational Leadership in the Anglophone Caribbean" by Denise Blackstock

Executive Summary

Throughout the Caribbean, much attention has been given to the design of national gender policies and much effort has been placed on their approval in national cabinets. Dominica, Jamaica, Belize, Bahamas, the Cayman Islands, the British Virgin Islands and Trinidad and Tobago stand out in the region in relation to the development of national gender policies. The Commonwealth of Dominica is the first Caribbean island that accepted and launched the National Gender Policy. Since 2006, the year of the country's cabinet's approval, Dominica has presumably undertaken a process of implementing the policy.

Generally, policy intentions do not necessarily translate into policy practice (Mosse 2004). It is rather relationships, entrenched interests, networks, priorities, "convenience" and "negotiations" (Mohammed, 2014) that guide policy practice. Thus, policy implementation is not a single, homogenous process. It needs to be understood as a complex discursive terrain shaped by diverse social, economic and political forces (Li 2007). Insufficient focus, however, has been placed on what the process of policy implementation involves and on its relationship with the policy itself (Mosse 2004, 640). In researching policy implementation, one must pay attention to what Michel de Certeau calls the "polytheism" of scattered practices" (de Certeau, 1984, 48) of beneficiaries who on the one hand "may consent to dominant [policy] models---using the authorized scripts given them by projects," but on the other hand "make of them something different" (Mosse 2004, 645). This "[making of them something different" entails covert practices, which operate concomitantly to the public authorized policy texts (Mosse 2004, 645). As Mosse indicates, lessons still remain to be learned about these practices, the actors involved and the politics of alliance they subscribe to, the synchronicity of multiple and competing agendas and interests, the negotiations taking place, and not lastly, about the relationship between policy and practice (Mosse 2004, 640). The question that has been posed by scholars and is still valid to ask: "What if, instead of policy producing practice, practices produce policy?" (Mosse 2004, 640).

Using qualitative, exploratory methods of data collection, the research conducted in Dominica explored the complex discursive terrain that the gender policy implementation entails. The chapter discusses the ways the policy implementation process reveals the negotiation of meanings and perspectives on masculinities, women's status and rights, and gender justice, and pays particular attention to the ways in which interpretations of the gendered realities of boys and men and their

place within gendered power relations shape the practice of the national gender policy. Such a focus implicitly entails a study of how such interpretation influences the strategies of feminists, the women's rights activism within the state gender apparatus, civil society organisations, the participation of men in advancing gender justice, and the overall outcomes of the national gender policy's transformative goals.

Policy implementation is conceptualized as a complex, challenging, and versatile process in order to resonate to the reality on the ground, and of which ultimate result is the realization of its goals for the beneficiaries. This chapter shows that it is through policy practice that the policy acquires meaning and at the same time produces meaning at the different relevant levels of the implementing actors, so that it is possible to be internalized, processed and practiced (An'Na-im 2002; Merry 2006; Biholar 2013). In the context of the Dominica National Gender Policy the meaning is acquired and generated by putting forward masculinity concerns, and questions about men and boys. It turns out that within the masculinist environment characteristic to the state, it is necessary not only for women, but also for men to engage in gender negotiations.

Drawing on the concepts of gender negotiations and politics of convenience (Mohammed 2014), this chapter argues that fixed understandings of gender roles, asymmetric gender relations, and misunderstandings of the concept of gender as referring to women only while obscuring men, present resistances to the practice of the national gender policy to advance gender justice. The realities and perspectives of women's inequality and low status manifest in the marginality of the gender machinery within the state apparatus. Such marginality extends to the national gender policy and its goals of transforming prevailing gender relations, which is ignored by state actors. This requires that the institutional intersects with the personal. In other words, feminist activists within the state gender machinery engage in extensive personal networking and advocacy in order to be able to give life to the national gender policy. Moreover, the hegemony of masculinism within the state makes it necessary not only for women, but also for men to engage in gender negotiations in which they utilize alliances with women rather than resisting the feminist agenda for equality. In fact, these alliances open for men and boys both personal (with other men) and institutional (within and with organizations) spaces of conversation about men's issues. Such spaces enable men's visibility and the debunking of stereotypes related to the construction of masculinity (and femininity).

Lessons for Caribbean feminist advocacy for national gender policies should therefore take into account that the gender policy becomes a representation of multiple priorities, and at times divergent practices, either personal or institutional

interests and understandings of what is necessary to be achieved in reality. The practice of implementing gender policies seems to be rather a continuous updating of the text of the policy so that it represents the reality on the ground, the reality of grassroots or civil servants' whose work relates to the policy. When interests, priorities and conveniences couple with fixed understandings of gender role constructions, the asymmetry of gender relations, and misunderstandings of the concept of gender as referring to women only, ignoring the gender policy as an important state instrument should not take us by surprise. The association of the notion of gender with the term woman relegates the policy to an inferior place, where women's place is, hence its practice, confirming patriarchal arrangements of society. Consequently, the implementation or efforts to implement the policy are indicative of the failure to deal with the construction of gender identities. Therefore, the marginality of the gender machinery within the state apparatus and the overlooking of the gender policy makes the practice of implementing the policy a projection rather than concrete, present action.

Introduction

The hegemony of masculinity is an ideology that “profoundly” affects the modern societal structure (Nurse 2004, 3). Not only women, but also men are affected. The idea of inequality as a women’s issue paralleled by the perception that “men are neither a problem nor have problems” is a “myth”, which has started to “erode” (Rutherford 1988; Nurse 2004, 3). In fact, gender inequality in its ideological and material dimensions, is reproduced partly by the invisibility of masculinity (Kimmel 2004). To a certain extent Nurse explained, the debunking of the gender myth led to an increasing attention to and the inclusion of masculinities in the gender equality discourse (Rutherford 1988; Nurse 2004, 3).

In an effort to achieve gender equity and equality, and overall social justice, the Commonwealth of Dominica drafted and approved the National Policy and Action Plan for Gender Equity and Equality in the Commonwealth of Dominica (2006) (hereinafter the National Gender Policy). It is worth noting that the gender policy, a strategy in the feminist agenda for advancing women’s rights and their full enjoyment of equality, pays particular attention to and engages with the discourse(s) on masculinities, and on boys and men. The document states that “collaboration between men and women” is essential for achieving gender equality (Dominica National Gender Policy (DNGP) 2006, 10) because some men who feel “threatened by the idea of equity between the sexes” (DNGP 2006, 11) oppose the idea. Such views are fuelled by “a perception that there is a direct relationship between women’s advancement and the displacement of, or worsening in the status of men” (DNGP 2006, 11). In engaging with the concept of gender, the policy acknowledges that “central to the understanding of gender is the recognition of an inequity in existing male-female relations that are characterized by the subordination of women and the devaluation of anything or anyone defined as feminine. At the same time, traditional notions of masculinity and manhood can be a problem for men themselves, as well as for women” (DNGP 2006, 13). To that end, the policy refers to the concept of gender as the relations of power between women and men (DNGP 2006, 13).

In its goals and strategic objectives sections the policy gives equal consideration to women and men. For example, one policy aim to “transform inequitable gender relations in order to improve women’s status relative to that of men where lingering disabilities keep women in subordinate positions” is immediately followed by a similar policy aim focusing on men (DNGP 2006, 14).

Based on qualitative data collected in Dominica, this chapter examines how the

gender policy implementation process involves a negotiation of meanings and perspectives on masculinities, women's status and rights, and gender justice. The chapter pays particular attention to the ways in which interpretations of the gendered realities of boys and men, and their place within gendered power relations shape the implementation of the country's national gender policy. Such a focus implicitly entails a study of how such interpretation influences the strategies of feminists, the women's rights activism within the state gender apparatus and civil society organizations, the participation of men in advancing gender justice, and the overall outcomes of the national gender policy's transformative goals. Drawing on the concepts of gender negotiations and politics of convenience, this chapter argues that fixed understandings of gender roles, asymmetric gender relations, and misunderstandings of the concept of gender as referring to women only while obscuring men, present resistances to the process of implementing the national gender policy to advance gender justice.

As Mohammed explains in her paper "Gender Politics and National Gender Policies in Three Caribbean Societies", "gender negotiations must be viewed as the uphill struggle to achieve greater rights and benefits and are not restricted to women's rights over men, but as much that between men and men, women and women, and all of these groupings with the state" (Mohammed 2014, 7). In this quest for understanding ways to achieve gender justice in the Caribbean, we are guided by Barriteau's definition of gender as "a complex system of personal and social relations through which women and men are socially created and maintained and through which they gain access to, or are allocated status, power and material resources within society" (Barriteau 2001, 26). Policy implementation is conceptualized as a complex, challenging, and versatile process in order to resonate to the reality on the ground, and of which ultimate results in the realization of its goals for the beneficiaries. With that in mind, the research conducted in Dominica for this chapter focused on and explored the implementation process of the national gender policy.² It consequently reveals that it is through practice that the policy acquires meaning, and at the same time produces meaning for the various implementing actors, including governmental agencies, civil society organizations and individual beneficiaries of the gender policy so that it is possible to be internalized, processed and practiced (An'Na-im 2002; Merry 2006; Biholar 2013). In the context of the Dominica National Gender Policy the meaning is acquired and generated by putting forward masculinity concerns, questions about men and boys and manhood in the

² The process of policy implementation is understood as the practice of the policy. Therefore, the two notions are used interchangeably throughout this research.

nowadays society. The chapter concludes that within the state's masculinist environment, it is necessary not only for women, but also for men to engage in gender negotiations.

Pursuing the idea of the practice of implementing a gender policy in field research makes the researcher feel the practitioners' experience of chasing an illusory goal. Policy implementation emerges as "wishful thinking". "There is a lot to be done" or the issues addressed in the national gender policy are matters "we hope to address in the very near future" (Interview, PS, MOE) were the mantras continuously referred to during the numerous interviews and discussions we conducted with civil servants and civil society representatives about implementing the national gender policy in Dominica. As researchers, we felt like we were on a Quijotian mission naively seeking a goal that had no relevance within the present reality. Discussions surrounding the practice of implementing the gender policy involved distrust in the current process, hopeful projections that concrete actions would occur soon, and sentiments that there was a disjuncture between policy-making, policy goals and policy implementation and practice.

Field findings confirm theoretical views, which indicate that generally policy intentions do not necessarily translate into policy practice (Mosse 2004). It is rather relationships, entrenched interests, networks, priorities, "convenience" and "negotiations" (Mohammed 2014) that guide policy practice.³ Thus, policy implementation is not a single, homogenous process. It needs to be understood as a complex discursive terrain shaped by diverse social, economic and political forces (Li 2007).

In undertaking this discussion, the chapter first focuses on the policy's definition and operationalization of the concept of gender. Thus, it explores the multiple meanings of gender and the competing priorities of the national gender policy in Dominica. The chapter reveals that through opening the understanding of gender beyond women, the policy enables a space for multiple and competing interpretations of women's and men's gendered realities, and of the gender relations of power in the policy document and in public discourse. The chapter then documents the divergent policy practice within the state apparatus. This discussion reveals that the realities and perspectives of women's inequality and low status manifests in the marginality of the state's gender machinery, as well as the national gender policy and its goals of transforming prevailing gender relations that state actors ignore. This requires feminist activists within the state gender machinery

³ The terms "convenience" and "negotiations" used in this context are borrowed from Patricia Mohammed who coined them as the concepts of "politics of convenience" and "gender negotiations". These concepts are defined and further used throughout this chapter.

(institutional) to engage in extensive personal networking and advocacy (personal) in order to be able to give life to the national gender policy. The chapter documents the ways in which the state gender machinery attempted to achieve successful policy implementation and transformation of gender inequalities through dissemination of the policy document, workshops and consultations with state ministries, cross-sectoral state policy makers and community groups who were policy beneficiaries. Based on interviews with civil servants, feminist activists and civil society representatives, the chapter unearths that the hegemony of masculinity within the state makes it necessary not only for women, but also for men to engage in gender negotiations in which they utilize alliances with women rather than resisting the feminist agenda for equality.

The chapter also suggests that Caribbean feminist advocates for national gender policies should take into account that the policy becomes a representation of multiple priorities and at times divergent practices, and personal or institutional interests and understandings of what is necessary to be achieved in reality. The practice of implementing a gender policy seems to be rather a continuous updating of the text of the policy so that it represents the reality of grass roots or civil servants whose work relates to the gender policy. The chapter concludes that it should not be surprising that the actors responsible for implementing the gender policy ignore it as an important state instrument, when competing interests, priorities and conveniences combine with people's fixed understandings of gender role constructions, the asymmetry of gender relations, and misunderstandings of the concept of gender. The association of the notion of gender with the term woman relegates the policy to "the women's place", which is the inferior one in the gender balance. Correspondingly, within the State apparatus, the gender machinery occupies a marginal place, while the practice of the gender policy can go overlooked or is just a projection for the future rather than concrete, present action. This confirms the patriarchal arrangements of society. In other words, it mirrors the failure to deal with the asymmetric construction and reproduction of gender.

Methodology

Throughout the Caribbean much attention has been given to the design of national gender policies, as well as their approval in national cabinets. Dominica, Jamaica, Belize, Bahamas, the Cayman Islands, the British Virgin Islands and Trinidad and Tobago have developed national gender policies.⁴ The Commonwealth

⁴ The Jamaican cabinet, for example, approved the national policy for gender equality in 2011 after two policy

of Dominica is the first Caribbean island to approve and launch its policy. Since 2006, which was the year of the cabinet's approval, Dominica presumably underwent a process of implementing the policy. Scholars point out, however, that generally, there is insufficient understanding of the life of the policy after its drafting (Mosse 2004). In other words, there is insufficient focus on what the process of policy implementation involves and its relationship with the policy itself (Mosse 2004, 640). One must pay attention to what Michel de Certeau calls the "polytheism" of scattered practices" (de Certeau 1984, 48) among beneficiaries who on the one hand "may consent to dominant [policy] models---using the authorized scripts given them by projects", but on the other hand "make of them something different" (Mosse 2004, 645). This "making of them something different" entails covert practices, which operate concomitantly to the public authorized policy texts (Mosse 2004, 645). As Mosse indicates, lessons still remain to be learned about these practices, about the actors involved and the politics of alliance they subscribe to, about the synchronicity of multiple and competing agendas and interests, about negotiations taking place and not lastly, about the relationship between policy and practice (Mosse 2004, 640). The question that has been posed by scholars and is still valid to ask: "What if, instead of policy producing practice, practices produce policy?" (Mosse 2004, 640).

It is exactly this process of policy implementation and practice in Dominica that this research is concerned. The study of the complex discursive terrain that policy implementation involves makes qualitative, exploratory methods of data collection an approach. Applying the case study method suits the intention of the research to offer a thorough and holistic understanding of the policy implementation and practice process (Biholar 2013, 111). This falls in line with Gerring's explanation that "[o]ne of the primary virtues of the case study method is in-depth...detail, richness, completeness, wholeness, or the degree of variance in an outcome that is accounted for by an explanation...Case studies are thus rightly identified with 'holistic' analysis" (Gerring 2007, 49). Such data-oriented, holistic understanding facilitates the "[u]nearth[ing] [of] explanations, clues and insights", which may lead to building theories useful not only for academic discussions, but also for guiding the practice by "informing possible interventions" (Plummer 2010, 3).

This study encompasses ethnographic methods of qualitative data collection in order to examine the lived realities of policy implementation in the national context of Dominica, which represents the site of field research. Information was gathered

submissions in 2008 and 2010. The Belize cabinet requested the amendment of the 2002 national gender policy and accepted the revised national gender policy in 2013. The draft national policy still awaits the cabinet's approval in Trinidad and Tobago and the Bahamas.

through forty semi-structured, in-depth interviews, three focus group discussions (FGDs), various participatory and unobtrusive field observations, informal discussions, text, visual and audio data. We also supplemented these instruments of data collection with the participation in the the photography exhibition “Look a Fada” on fathering in the public space organised on the occasion of Father’s Day 2013.⁵ This allowed a closer engagement with data, which brought valuable insights for the study.

The initial data collection plan involved a three-level approach, gathering information from the government, the civil society and grassroots organizations. However, even if we did engage in conversations with people at all these levels during field explorations, we shifted the data collection focus on individuals, especially at the governmental and civil society levels. Because of the small size of the Dominica society, individuals often moved between the different levels occupying positions in both government and civil society. This, in fact, supported a triangulation of extensive data in a relatively short period of time.

The main respondents at the governmental level were female and male representatives of the Bureau of Gender Affairs, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Agriculture, permanent secretaries and gender focal points at various ministries, the one female magistrate dealing with family issues, and police officers. At the civil society level, we interacted with various members of the Dominica National Council of Women, CariMAN, Planned Parenthood Association. We also met with female and male retired activists, freelance social workers and media moderators. At the grassroots level, we met with women in Portsmouth, the second town in the north of the island. Our first interaction with them was thanks to the Bureau of Gender Affairs who facilitated our participation in a grassroots consultation on the national gender policy, which aimed to accelerate the policy implementation process. The consultation was conducted on April 22, 2013 by a gender consultant visiting the island. Our second meeting with grassroots women was at a focus group meeting, which we organized. While we also met with grassroots men, this method posed limitations to the study because men were difficult to gather to discuss gender issues. This difficulty is also one of the limitations that stakeholders confront during the process of policy implementation.

Our observations and experiences with men as a group in Dominica, was that due to socialization into the masculine roles of being tough, in control, and not

⁵ The photography exhibition was organised by the UK PhD candidate Adom Heron and the researcher, Dr. Ramona Biholar, in association with Caribbean Male Action Network (CariMAN) and Child Fund Caribbean.

emotional, men tended not to speak out or join conversations on gender issues and experiences of violence. Instead, they gathered on football fields, or at rum or barber shops. Many men were hesitant to speak to us as well due to the fact that Dominica, and particularly Roseau, the island's capital, is a small place.

Our conversation with fathers in Roseau, however, was a classic case of serendipity during field research. At a moment when it seemed that our attempts to meet with male beneficiaries of the national gender policy fell apart, we happened to meet a father who was willing to speak out and provided us with a great deal of insights from the male perspective.

Another study limitation was posed by the scarcity of available data on social issues at the statistics office in the country. The only available report on the population and housing census at the time of data collection was from 2001, and the latest labor force survey occurred in 2005. Further, the Commonwealth of Dominica Millennium Development Goals Assessment of 2010 was not available for public viewing. It took an extensive discussion to convince the person in charge of the report's release to allow us to purchase it.

Findings

Situation Analysis: Concerns About Men and Boys in the Dominican Society and in the National Gender Policy

Notwithstanding women's issues, the policy places emphasis on addressing concerns about men and boys. It recognizes that "by 2005 the underperformance of males in the education system relative to that of females, coupled with a burgeoning academic and popular discourse around issues related to masculinity have raised serious concerns for policy makers and planners" (DNGP 2006, 62). The document identifies gender differentials in education performance as an area of concern and action. The policy states the reason behind these differentials in the country include "the effects of a generation of males who are ill prepared to take on some of the occupations and positions which should be shared between men and women in society" (DNGP 2006, 83).

The policy also highlights paternity leave and workers with HIV/AIDS as central concerns. In relation to these areas, the document refers to the promotion of "healthier notions of masculinity and responsibility in family life, institutional arrangements must facilitate the active participation of males within the family as a means of reordering gender stereotypes" (DNGP 2006, 71). The policy points out

that the reality of life in Dominica does not always match the ascription of gender role describing that beyond the nurturer role, women take the role of “both breadwinner and protector,” or they migrate along with men, and leave families or aging parents to their male partner’s care. The document also points out that men in the country are willing to take responsibilities beyond the breadwinner role, but can “barely find jobs to feed themselves much less a family” (Dominica National Gender Policy 2006, 75). Recognizing men as an “increasingly ‘disempowered’ gender” in the education area, the policy raises the question of the construction of masculinity, rather than limiting the focus on the educational achievement alone, (Dominica National Gender Policy 2006, 82-83).

It is important to point out, however, that despite the fact that women in the country take more advantage of education opportunities than men, this does not translate fully into equal opportunities within political leadership roles. Data from the Commonwealth of Dominica Millennium Development Goals Assessment of 2010 indicate that “[i]n spite of the 66.7 percent increase (3 women to 5 women from the 2005 to 2010 period) of women involved in the parliamentary and decision-making process, women’s participation in politics remains relatively low. Only 18.5 percent (5 women) of parliamentarians in the country are women, compared to twenty-two men (MDGs Assessment 2010, 33). In turn, women in the country occupy the majority (61.5 percent) of permanent public administration managerial level positions, such as permanent secretaries (MDGs Assessment 2010, 33). Such data reveals the persistence of gendered occupational stereotypes where most men occupy decision-making positions and women occupy administrative positions.

Concerns about men and boys, and masculinities emerged with almost no exceptions in our discussions about the gender policy with various individuals at all levels, supporting our content analysis that the policy focuses a great deal on men and boys. Respondents mostly referred to gender disparities in the education enrollment at tertiary levels and to male underachievement especially at this education level, with a ratio of 40 women to 3 men graduates of the University of the West Indies (UWI). Most people directly linked male underachievement to employment concerns. Respondents explained that if the education trend continued, adult men would not be prepared for professional life and instead would take up minimum wage jobs at a lower level than many women. As a result, some respondents expressed that the relation between women and men would be affected. Men will feel emasculated, which will lead to aggressive behavior (Biholar 2013, 192). Respondents also voiced concerns that the lack of male employment would lead to male idleness and involvement in crime and consumption of marijuana-

-- a trend commonly called the “pon di corner” phenomenon.

At the moment, Dominica faces a worrisome high number of men in prison (Interview police superintendent). Stakeholders from organizations that focus on male issues, talk about how a great deal of anger management programs, especially in schools, have emerged as a result of males in the country displaying anger issues. An absentee father phenomenon in the country has also led many organizations to focus on efforts to involve fathers in parenting and family life (CariMAN, group interview).

....something we're seeing...our boys are underachieving. Well, based on national assessments that we do, it comes out that our boys are underachieving. And that is a concern for us because you would want your boys and your girls to be at the same level. So all those are issues we hope to address in the very near future. What we have found, a lot of men they drop their wife or girlfriend to the UWI School of Continuing Studies. They will return to pick them up, that is a concern for us at the Ministry of Education...you'll find very few men pursuing higher level education. So you have a lot more women pursuing higher-level education than men. Very few men, and that is a concern for us at the Ministry of Education. ... we have not really done the full investigation as to what really is the issue.(Interview, PS, Ministry of Education).

This data from the Ministry of Education was supported from interview and focus group discussions respondents at various organizations including, Bureau of Gender Affairs (BGA), CariMAN, University of West Indies Open Campus, Dominica Association of Catholic Men (Dacamen).⁶ Respondents explained that men are disempowered in the country as a consequence of the socialization process. They expressed that the construction of gender identities assigned to boys and girls, and the socialization along these asymmetric gender roles are more detrimental to boys, than girls nowadays. During a group interview with teachers at a grammar school, one discussant stated:

When I say disadvantage in that they [boys] do not really get the kind of attention that they should get, to me we place more emphasis on the girls. You know like at a home, we would actually have rules for these girls. As a girl, you don't do this and you don't do that, and you need to do that. With the boys, oh...they are boys...from small, we let them have their way. They go out, they have their way (Group interview, grammar school teachers).

⁶ Dacamen is a Dominican non-governmental organization.

Another teacher supported this view. She stressed that the issue of boys' underachievement is a consequence of more attention being paid to girls. This translates into girls becoming more compliant and diligent (Group interview, grammar school teachers). As a result, they pursue education, while boys enjoy freedom from rules and already get a sense of independence. They turn into men who "are more laid back" and spend most of their time at the rum shop. However, one reaps what one sows. As Chevannes stresses in his 1999 Grace Kennedy Foundation lecture "What We Sow and What We Reap. The Problems in the Cultivation of Male Identity in Jamaica", the asymmetric socialization and resultant construction of gender identities has asymmetric results (Chevannes 1999). A male education officer at the Ministry of Education pointed out that the side effect of such asymmetry is that "females are taking equal opportunities and running away with [them], so the males are left in the dark" (Interview male policy officer, MOE). Yet again, the data we collected confirms what earlier theoretical insights suggest related to the connection between male privileging and academic performance (Figueroa 2004), the division of labor along sex lines (Chevannes 2001), hegemonic masculinity (Connell 1995; Plummer 2010) and peers' policing of manhood (Plummer 2010) explained: that gender inequalities affect negatively not only girls, but also boys. Both girls and boys are rendered vulnerable. Although their vulnerability may manifest differently, in essence both are victims of the patriarchal arrangements of gender (Biholar 2013, 9). This leads to multiple discourses of empowerment and vulnerability for both women and men, which concur and compete. For example, grassroots women from Portsmouth, a town in the North of the island, emphasized during the Bureau of Gender Affairs (BGA) consultations on the national gender policy that men are at a disadvantage vis-à-vis women. "We find our boys more back. We should push them. Not leave them like that, because women are more advanced." (Researcher's observation BGA grassroots consultation session, Portsmouth). Yet, other grass roots women from the same area rhetorically asked "Men are left behind by whom,?" alluding that it is men's choice to be in the position that they are at present (Group interview, grassroots women, Portsmouth).

The detrimental effect that socialization along dichotomous gender roles has on girls and women should not be disregarded. While expectations of girls and women are high, putting them under constant pressure to excel in order to prove themselves, boys and men, by virtue of their male gender, are entitled to positions of excellence. This historical privileging of the males, as Figueroa (2004) explains, fuels boys' academic underperformance and underachievement. The education and socio-economic systems, both structured and mirroring the unbalanced gender

arrangement, allow the asymmetric construction of gender roles and expectations, and stand for another reason for male underachievement, (Group interview, grassroots women, Portsmouth). In other words, the structures in place enable boys to choose occupations, which are more lucrative and which do not require intensive schoolwork. Reminding of the earlier scholarly work (Bailey 1997), Chevannes stresses that men persist in dominating positions of power:

[...] girls choose the clerical and service areas, but boys choose the technical and vocational, the ones perceived as bringing higher levels of income---both types of choices determined by prevailing gender ideas; outside of it they generally fare better than girls, when employed, and undertake more own-account business and high risk crimes. (Chevannes 2001, 224).

These analyses compete in scholarship and public discourse with the male marginalisation theory, which states,

The description of Caribbean societies points to lower-strata men's marginal positions in the family, role reversal in a small but increasing number of households, boys' declining participation and performance in the educational system, the greater prospect of men inheriting their fathers' position in the social structure, the decline in the proportions of men in the highest-paying and most prestigious occupations and the decrease in men's earning power relative to women's especially in white collar occupations." (Miller 1991, 97).

As Barriteau indicates (2000), such multiple, competing discourses are indicative of the importance of attending to, through national gender policies, competing approaches to men's role in challenging gender inequality and achieving social change.

Competing Meanings of Gender and Multiple Priorities in The Dominica National Gender Policy

The traditional construction of gender identities on the premise of men's superiority versus women's inferiority and the resultant asymmetric relation between the sexes are reflected in the approach to initiatives that are perceived as related to women, i.e. the gender policy. This obviously shows the misconception of the notion of gender as meaning women only. The shift in the discourse from women to gender did not correspond to a shift in people's consciousness. One respondent asserted the misunderstanding caused by the concept of gender in Dominica.

When the issues of gender took center stage, there was a little misunderstanding I'll say. People were still focusing on women, not knowing that gender doesn't really focus on women. It focuses both on male and

female. (Interview, civil society activist and top-level civil servant, Ministry of Health, National Drug Abuse Prevention).

Another respondent confirmed,

We are still at the stage where most of our education has to be on the difference with gender. When people hear Bureau of Gender Affairs they tell you Women's Bureau. They hear me talking about gender they say women's issues. So it is a constant education that we are fighting for the needs of everybody.” (Interview, member of DNCW & Ministry of Agriculture gender focal point).

Yet another stated,

We have to be so careful of how we bring it up, but at the same time we have to educate the population what is the focus here, what is really gender because when you really begin to understand it you really see it as gender solely being women, you know, and I think that's a job we have in our times. (FGD CariMAN).

CariMAN members went on to assert,

I think part of the misconception of gender is where it started because it was established because the concept is that there was a greater prevalence of violence against women than men and men would say it as less of a person if you report it if a lady give violence against you. By the time you go to report it again both male and female then the men still, yea the damage was already done so the damage control now is really great ok that once you hear gender people think female and think that you try to protect women rather than men, so again it's perception. How we can change that perception? I think what CARIMAN is doing, what segments in society is doing in terms of holding workshops, and sensitizing persons on what gender really is, that's the best way forward, education. (FGD CariMAN)

The policy is treated as gender is conceived and treated---as “an outside runner “to” the political stage on a “minority position” (Mohammed 2014, 23). As Mohammed explained,

....use of the term gender instead of women in public documents has not convinced majority popular opinion that it is inclusive of the gendered condition faced by men themselves, nor that women are capable of creating policies and programs that enhance the economic fortunes or more efficient governance that might ultimately benefit all.” [emphasis added] (Mohammed 2014, 5).

The Ministry of Gender supports these sentiments,

[...] even if we have been trying to make people understand that we [at the Bureau of Gender Affairs] care for the needs of everybody, men are not really

comfortable coming in there ... Very few men who are battered by their female partners will come forward, but we know it happens; and so we have to constantly remind them that when the Bureau does its work, it is also about those needs as well.” (Interview member of DNCW & Ministry of Agriculture gender focal point).

Findings indicate that the concept of gender offers a space for men to join the equality struggle and strive for their empowerment, while also allowing women organizations the space to continue their work with legitimacy. As one respondent explained, “[w]hen it was the Bureau of Women's Affairs (BWA), the name alone would not encourage men to go. Their concerns were not attended as they liked” (Interview teachers’ union member).

Various formal and informal conversations at the Bureau of Gender Affairs indicated that the shift from women to gender, the usage of the concept gender in the title of the policy, the change in the Bureau's name and the consideration of men/boys’ issues seem to facilitate the implementation of the policy. In essence, these methods emerge as a feminist strategy to advance gender equity and equality. In other words, gender and the gaze on men emerge as a space of negotiation and possibility to continue the struggle for women’s advancement and their equality with men. Gender mainstreaming allows women groups to continue their work, and men to enter the empowerment and the gender equality scene.

Gender---‘A Social Category Ripe for Manipulation’

It emerges that the notion of gender creates a contentious space of multiple interpretations and contradictions making gender rather a strategic manoeuver. While ideas of women’s inequality are contested, men seem to occupy the space gender creates to claim their disempowerment. Consequently, men approach gender as a strategy to include men’s rights. One respondent from BGA clearly pointed out, “[p]erhaps if we didn't introduce gender, perhaps it wouldn't have been passed” (Interview, director BGA). Another respondent pointed out that the lack of male presence among the staff of the bureau is a shortcoming of the institution, which corroborated the misunderstandings and mistrust in its name change.

One of the shortcomings of the Bureau of Gender Affairs is that we do not have a masculine presence. It's only women in there and so even if we have been trying to make people understand that we care for the needs of everybody but men are not really comfortable coming in there.” (Interview member of DNCW & Ministry of Agriculture Gender Focal Point, March 18,

2013)

Men respondents confirmed the unease men still felt with the bureau, despite its shifted focus to gender.

We may have had women affairs before, but then there's still some men who still do not see it as if it is gender; the perception is that the Bureau of Gender Affairs is really catering for women. I guess it's part of the culture---you're a man, you don't need to come out and say what is happening to you or something negative happening to you; keep it to yourself, don't talk about it. Whereas for a woman, if a male doing something to a lady, a lady would be more open toward talking about it, would try to get help. So we're hoping that the gender policy will address the issues of men, men looking for assistance, men looking for somebody to talk to, men who would open up (FGD CariMAN).

As with old wine in new bottles, the general sentiment is of distrust in the change from women's affairs to gender affairs. Many perceive it as a surface initiative, by which the content and the attitudes of the bureau remain the same. The agency is heavily criticized that although it took gender in its name, in reality, it does not look at gender, because it does not involve men in its work. One male activist for the rights of sexual minorities and a CariMAN member as well said, "we hear a lot about women, but what about men?" He used a rather sarcastic tone to talk about feminist work, the Bureau of Gender Affairs and the practice of gender policy implementation. He mentioned that the Bureau is not taking up men issues. Even if they took a gender name and they look at a gender policy, "they still are a bunch of feminists" (Interview, sexual minority rights activists). Such statements are indicative of the negative connotation attached to the notion of feminism. Although feminist activists lead the process of policy implementation to achieve gender justice, feminism and feminist analysis face hostile resistance.

The "what about men" question translated in CariMAN's use of the space of gender equality and non-discrimination as an opportunity for men to transcend the patriarchal codes by which they are the providers and absentee parents. In other words, gender equality becomes a space for a multi-layered empowerment of men--- not only to escape old stereotypes but also to challenge gender inequality as the core issue of the gender policy. Moreover, from the executive board members explanations, CariMAN enters the conversation on gender equality through the alliance with women's rights, building up on women groups' experiences, and through work on the elimination of violence. While acknowledging and supporting work on VAW, they start voicing the gender-based violence experienced by men. In

that way they challenge the patriarchal ideologies of the traditional fixed roles men and women are ascribed. They challenge the stereotyping of men as perpetrators and of women as victims. Therefore, for men's organizations, gender is a platform for male empowerment as well (Interview, CariMAN President).

It seems that being central to the patriarchal arrangement of gender, men cannot see beyond the marginal (women) moving towards their "dominating" space, and once near, they feel disempowered. This indicates to us that within a patriarchal context, men struggle to occupy the position of power that they feel they have allegedly, lost and use an equality discourse to highlight it (Field notes). Within this sexist context, alternative masculinities feel even more threatened and voice even stronger hostility towards "feminist" efforts. Men navigate in a masculinist environment by carefully negotiating the feminist approach, and engaging with gender equality.

We as CARIMAN, as a male organization, need to be careful because some of the reaction we get, not on a whole basis, is that people may say well CARIMAN is like giving more power to the women because when you say: listen, look at the relationship with women, stop violence and so on. Those who do not understand it will say look at what they doing to us, you are not talking about it, but they talking about women, women, women, but it was a really bigger stride women did for themselves. Now is like somebody saying what you're doing is telling women to be responsible respectable and so on, and respecting women is like giving women more power. That is why we have to be so careful of how we bring it up. But at the same time we have to educate the population what is the focus here, we need to educate you know what is gender." (FGD CariMAN).

What emerges is that for both men and women, the policy is an instrument of negotiation with the state, still masculine in its set-up. Not only women, but also men are now struggling for power in a masculinist environment. Ironically, not only women but also men can fall victims of an environment in which the balance of power weighs heavier on men's side. Ultimately, gender opens the space for male power and agency. Men use equality to negotiate their loss of power and to resist woman-centred feminism, by using a feminist agenda.

For the women, and the bureau in particular, as the central implementer of the policy, gender and the gender policy implementation become a space for bargaining in order to continue the work on women's issues. To make a policy on equality and women's issues attractive, the concerns for men and masculinities need to be visible and addressed therefore publicly. It appears that male power/androcentrism

legitimizes the project of transforming patriarchy and advancing women's rights.

The Inclusive Effect of Gender: CariMAN Dominica

CariMAN Dominica exemplifies the ways men join the gender equality conversation and how perspectives of manhood influence the gender policy. A number of organisations allied with the bureau of gender affairs to draft and launch the document. All interview respondents for this chapter mentioned CariMAN as the men's organization involved with the work on the national gender policy. Its focus on men's empowerment and its male composition makes it "one of the most recognizable groups in Dominica" (FGD, CariMAN). Consequently, CariMAN is a pivotal organization for understanding the role of men and masculinity in the implementation of the national gender policy. CariMAN, the Caribbean Male Action Network, is a Caribbean regional male organization, which consists of men groups across the region. Generally, the network's mission is "to engage Caribbean men in the examination of existing beliefs and norms, the promotion of respect for diversity and the development of new paradigms and competencies, thus creating opportunities to negotiate new relationships in order to achieve gender justice, social harmony and peaceful partnerships." Its vision is "a community of caring men, committed to partnering with women to create a just world where all people achieve their fullest potential." (www.Cariman.org, 2013).

CariMAN is rooted in the Jamaican male initiative Male Action Network (MAN), which undertook studies on men's perceptions of gender and gender equality. At the basis of CariMAN's presence in Dominica is a five-day training workshop on "masculinity", which took place in September 2009. In 2010, CariMAN was established in Dominica. Less than a year after, in June 2011, CariMAN launched as an official organization in Dominica, and in February 2012 the organization registered as an NGO.

The current president of the organization in Dominica, Thomas Holmes, participated in the 2009 workshop on behalf of the Ministry of Education together along with a male representative in the welfare division. Their double positioning, both in the government and as members of CariMAN, certainly facilitated the further formation of the organization in the small country and the consolidation of alliances. CariMAN's existence in Dominica, owed to the involvement and interest of individuals like the CariMAN president and to the political will coming from the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development and the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth Affairs. The latter organizations were represented by their permanent

secretaries, and the involvement of the acting minister for the Ministry of Social Services, Community Development and Gender Affairs at the time, Honorable Johnson Dirge. These government officials met with the chairman of regional CariMAN and a UNIFEM representative who facilitated a two-day workshop on “Gender, Masculinity and Gender Equality” in Dominica. As CariMAN president noted in his speech, “Chairman in Dominica actually was born because the two government officials accepted CariMAN” (Holmes 2011, 2). In fact, the Ministry of Education had a vested interest in and urged CariMAN “to take beyond the traditional school setting and work with the out of school youth” (Holmes 2011, 2). CariMAN’s engagement with masculinities and issues experienced by men and boys reflect some of the objectives stated in the gender policy (mentioned above). It can be stated that the governmental interest and support behind CariMAN’s presence and work in Dominica created room for the organization to become a crucial actor in the practice of the gender policy.

Additionally, it is important to note that not only internal political will, but also the interest of international organizations, such as UN WOMEN, represent a springboard for the work of CariMAN in Dominica.

Most of our projects really came through UN WOMEN...the two of us...when we went to Barbados to attend a workshop, we were given a sort of a mandate to go to our countries and to start the process [of establishing CariMAN]. When we came we had our first workshop that was funded by UNIFEM at that time. Since then we have been funded for all our projects. Just recently we had this UN Trust Fund through UN WOMEN. Again, it's through UN WOMEN so we have done quite a bit and then we laugh at it, well we are serious now of course, that here we have a male organization its being funded by women (FGD, CariMAN).

CariMAN members explained the interest of UN WOMEN, an organization, which primarily caters to women’s rights, as an education initiative that includes men in their efforts to create an environment conducive to women’s and men’s full enjoyment of equality and consequently encourages them to stand up for gender equality standards.

As they [UN WOMEN] say, they are seeing the benefits. If men could arise, could come up to what we have on paper as a policy, as a principle for men, we can't be more educated than women. It's definitely better for them, so their funding us, of which we are happy, so that we can be better educated. So it creates a better life for both the woman and the man.” (FGD, CariMAN).

It is noteworthy that this collaboration between UN WOMEN and CariMAN in Dominica of mobilizing men around the idea of gender justice and the implementation of the gender policy is a strategy feminist advocates in UNWOMEN have employed in an attempt to make the country's gender policy successful. It is also important to highlight that various discussions with CariMAN members confirm a religious undertone of CariMAN ideology and activities. As one respondent affirmed, "it [CariMAN] spins its compass on the Bible." This emphasis seems to come from the personal or professional interests of key persons on the organization's executive board. For instance, one key member has a strong Catholic upbringing, while another is a minister of religion. Therefore, CariMAN advances a masculine stereotype that advocates men to be respectable, hard working, and to go to church. It also supports the philosophy that men should not drink too much, or be "smoking fellows." (Field notes; Interview, CariMAN members; FGD, CariMAN). CariMAN is very much an elite group of men occupying certain professional offices. The men in the executive board, through their different positions in different offices, cater to and help CariMAN's projects (Discussion, CariMAN member).

During the organization's launch in Dominica, President Thomas Holmes outlined the organization's gender sensitization efforts---"sexual diversity and masculinity, training sessions to address issues comprising violence, life planning and, creating a Champions for Change network to combat violence against women." As the President further explained, the purpose of CariMAN is "to provide a forum for discussion on masculinity; design and develop interventions to facilitate communication around gender and manhood, and to share best practices." (Holmes, 2011). In order to achieve these goals, CariMAN undertakes "a multi-sectoral approach to engage boys and men, and individuals and groups who work with them through different learning methods and partnering with existing male and female groups and organizations." (Holmes 2011, 2) Members of the CariMAN executive board explain,

First of all our space is for boys, young men and men, so that we can come together share our work, discuss issues that we're faced with, social issues but also to share best practices of how do we help each other by talking about our experiences. The other one is to cooperate with women organizations to end gender-based violence especially. (FGD, CariMAN).

In their engagement with boys and men for their empowerment through an understanding of masculinity and manhood, CariMAN takes account of and builds on the strides and experiences of women's groups. In fact, it seems that CariMAN takes

the work that women have conducted, as well as their achievements as models of action for the empowerment of men.

So far I think we are being successful. At the same time I think some men are holding back because you don't see men just come out and then share experiences how women will do it. When we look at the women's group, we must applaud that the women have made good strides. They have succeeded in many areas and hence, probably, the poor perception of males as related to gender. Because even the women admit [that that's] why gender has been mentioned all the time about women's rights. So we're saying ok even if the women have made that much strides, have succeeded we are starting afresh. Other than that we are starting on our own to collaborate with them. They can help us make the strides that they made, how they got to where they got to and we could get there and have collaborative work together, because we are not dispelling that the women have succeeded. They have made good head way, hence the reason why I think it is even more forceful on men to come in line with women, cause we are looking it would seem like basically women are overtaking men in all walks of life (FGD, CariMAN).

It cannot be overlooked that the account also points fingers at the success of women as shadowing the presence of men in the gender space, which facilitated the misunderstanding of the definition of the concept of gender. Nevertheless, this does not emerge as an opposition. CariMAN rather uses the space that feminism/women's rights created to accommodate men within. For that, they use partnerships with women organizations, such as Dominica National Council for Women (DNCW), Bureau of Gender Affairs, but also the Planned Parenthood Association or the Ministry of Education. Such alliances help CariMAN's negotiation with the notion of gender. Alliances also help the organization gain a place in the gender equality conversation and carry out their work on the empowerment of men and boys.

We team up with Gender Affairs. We had a family event and then we played rounders with the women. But at the same time what we do is that we have discussions, we talk to them. Then we also have our forums. When it's Father's Day, Mother's Day we try to get together and we also have among ourselves training. We prepare the members of CARIMAN on how to bring out the message if you talking about gender (FGD, CariMAN).

Moreover, these collaborations/alliances help men and boys obtain a space of to discuss particular issues with men and other organizations. They also enable their visibility, and debunk stereotypes related to the construction of masculinity (and femininity). CariMAN members explained,

You have to go back to the same definition of how we construe gender. Emphasis has been on the women, but now they have the chance to expose the importance of the value and it can show the other aspects of men, the other side of men, not the men being the batterer, not the men being the commanding, domineering person, but the men as who we are. Because if they [men and boys] see that we represent the image, they will go for it. They [are] saying 'if they will represent me, that person that I am, we will go for it' (FGD, CariMAN).

CariMAN enters the gender discussion and facilitates the participation of men and partnerships with women organizations through joining the cause of eliminating gender-based violence.

Well the thing is men cannot work by themselves, and women cannot work by themselves, so what we realize is we need to develop a relationship....The main thing is how do we get the men and women to respect each other, not just men respecting women or women respecting men, but we're hoping that by working with the women whatever programme they have, we also support the men and their programme set up with the male population. So we believe that the best thing to do is to work together and that when they collaborating with emphasis on, you know, what you want to achieve as in a group, women, men coming together. But that's one of the main reasons why we do it-- to help women, and also help our men. And then the main thing is by that relationship try to reduce, and eventually, hopefully, is to eliminate violence (FGD CariMAN).

Gender-based violence seems to be the point to negotiate gender, challenge gender stereotyping and join the gender equality conversation.

Because it is felt that a lot of women go through and even sometimes men go through a little violence, violence against, and they found out a lot of men because of who we are, because of our machismo, we are being battered we are being bruised we are being whatever---but we don't say anything. We just leave it to whatever it is and you know that sort of a stigma in our society in our small society, if a man says he's battered well, although we know its that its happening, then, what he talking about? You're a man, why should you complain about a woman or you would be laughed at in the house in this Dominican society, complaining about you being beaten or you being bruised. You do have these people (FGD, CariMAN).

As expressed by the president, one of the underlying intentions of the organization is “to help boys and men develop and maintain positive relations with

girls and help eliminate gender-based violence, especially domestic violence.” Furthermore, “to [reach] the schools from early childhood through to the tertiary level and help the boys and young men develop new perspectives to help them stop violence and strengthen partnership with their female peers.” (Holmes 2011, 3) While the organization promotes women’s rights and elimination of violence against women, they challenge the stereotype of men as perpetrators. In this way they create a space in which men can debunk the male perpetrator stereotype and openly talk about gender-based violence against men.

Data from field research points out,

So basically we try to empower men and young men in general. You see how the women’s counsel will try to empower other women groups, try to come together to empower women. Some people say we are the perpetrators, but I think most times we are the victims. CariMAN is trying to uplift young men and men in general in forums where everyone can come together and you know discuss the issues (FGD, CariMAN).

CariMAN thus pursues its mission by working for a change in stereotyped mentality, which eventually leads to equality between women and men. In fact, the organization publicly affirms that its underlying principles are, among others, those of gender equality and collaboration between men and women for gender equality. Members strive to learn “from the experiences of Caribbean women who have had to liberate themselves from harmful gender roles, inequalities and stereotypes,” and to encourage men’s commitment “to their families and to overcome challenges, ideologies and stereotypes that prevent men from becoming equal partners in child rearing.”(www.cariman.org). Therefore, CariMAN builds on women groups’ experience with the struggle/fight for gender equality, which becomes a space for men to join women in the enjoyment of leadership. The President expressed that one of CariMAN’s purposes is to reach out to girls and women, ensuring them that its intention is “to partner with them and live together in love and harmony, that we want to stop violence against girls and women and that we want to share ideas and best practices with them, and that we want to be leaders with them”. (Holmes 2011, 3).

Competing interests become clear, as CariMAN builds on the feminist agenda. Our findings confirm that the state engages in what Mohammed coined as “politics of convenience”. In practice, governments and their representatives do not just deliver policy. They rather “seem to be invested in a democracy of convenience---whether that convenience benefits the individual politician, or the collective sentiment of an influential group.” (Mohammed 2014, 23).

Women also become a benchmark for equality achievements. CariMAN

challenges encoded gender roles and stereotypes by addressing the gendered approach to health. CariMAN commits “to help boys and men realize and acknowledge that medical check ups are not only for women, that healthy living is not only for women, and that good health is for everyone...that good health is not only physical, but mentally, socially, personally and spiritually” (Holmes 2011, 3).

While a homophobic tendency characterizes some private discussions from organization members, CARiMAN promotes a public discourse on gender equality, that accommodates the prerequisites of their funder---UNWOMEN--- that all grantees promote sexual equality. Yet this public discourse is disconnected from the private discussions among some CariMAN members related to sexual equality (Interview, CariMAN member). This is indicative of men’s negotiations with the feminist agenda for equality where the public-private dichotomy demarcates the extent to which men accept or resist the agenda. Rather than opposing the feminist approach, men build up on those aspects of women’s achievements in terms of equality with which they can engage without radical transformation of masculinism as a foundational ideology.

Men and the National Gender Policy

The director of the BGA explained that stakeholders who raised concerns about men and were interested in an involvement with the gender policy included national men's groups, individual women and women groups.

A lot of them also come from within state organizations based on the kind of reaction they were getting from their clients. For example they would remark, ‘Every time you speak it’s about women again, look at where our men are!’ So then when you have planned activities at the community level, you’ll find it’s mostly women. You hardly find the men, even when the topic doesn’t necessarily say it’s for women. So it was felt that to reach this group, you need to really have men be a change in focus. So men’s organizations, women groups as well, even the National Council of Women were already thinking, let us have a focus on [family], and perhaps some of them weren’t quite understanding of the whole term gender. Not looking for why a gender policy, it’s just that some of them were thinking, ‘There’s concern that our men are being disadvantaged, there’s concerns of violence and perhaps that due to women achieving and men feeling threatened.’ Those were the type of discussions going on at that point in time (Interview, director BGA).

As noted earlier, CariMAN was invited to participate in the national gender policy implementation process.

When the issue came up about ...establishing the gender policy, we were not

yet an organization...we became about four years or so later...but when the Bureau of Gender Affairs wanted to know the men organization CariMAN, then we were invited to the process of implementing the gender policy....I represented CariMAN at one of the meetings [where] the minister...gender affairs, the Dominican National Counsel of Women and a couple of other organizations [were] looking at the possibility of fully implementing the policy (FGD, CariMAN).

The policy facilitates CariMAN's participation as it speaks to the issues the organization highlights, and makes men visible in the gender conversation/space. It creates a platform to give men's plights voice, and encourages society to challenge traditionally ascribed masculine roles that state men are supposed to be tough, in control of their emotions and any given situation. The policy also speaks to CariMAN's concerns about men and boys, such as the gender disparities in education performance, and legitimizes the organization's work, providing an opportunity to strengthen and consolidate its place in the gender equality conversation.

We recognize they [women] attain something for themselves, so the men are saying the gender policy is gonna turn things around for us as men, and give us a voice that is better heard and we'll go for it. So I believe the fact that the identity of men in the policy is more palatable, and I can say basically even for myself as a male (FGD CariMAN).

The policy becomes a space of unsilencing and recognition that men undergo structural discrimination as well, that they can be disempowered and vulnerable within a masculinist environment. In this way, the policy opens up as space for men to start working on men's empowerment.

We been taught in our culture that men are supposed to be 'macho' right, and that is what messing up most of our men...not that they are macho, but that they become very weak you know what I'm saying...they become very weak in terms of trying to be strong...they become very weak so when you confronted by violence because they are confronted by violence, they can't respond, they can't deal with it. You see what I'm saying, because as you said, it would make them seem less a man (FGD CariMAN).

Contestations: Power Struggle of Men

The idea that men are at a detriment because of women's advancement is a contested issue in Dominica, and not generally accepted. On one hand, findings

show that the marginalization of men is illusory. The question emerged in the field “marginalized by whom?” Respondents point out that it is not about men being left out, it is about the choices they make---their interest in short-term, more lucrative, sometimes illegal activities versus going through the lengthy education system. It is noteworthy that these indications are made by professionals, by respondents that work with or are aware of the gender issues in the Dominican society. On the other hand, grassroots women express concerns that men are at risk. Research observations of the BGA grassroots meeting in Portsmouth show that women believe that they made their way ahead and now it is their turn to help men, by backing up and letting them go further. The argument people commonly use to support male marginaliation on popular radio shows relates to women’s achievement in education, pointing at the forty women graduates at UWI in Dominica versus the three male graduates (Interview, talking gender moderator). This, however, seems to be a superficial argument, whereas the real problem is a structural one and emerges from the identity constructions and socialization along ascribed asymmetric roles for women and men (Researcher’s field notes, Roseau).

The encoded division of labor, which runs along gender roles supports an economy system that allows male underachievement in education and involvement in illegal activities. Anchored in, and perpetuating underlying gender stereotypes, the economic system (which is gendered) allows men to make a living out of minimal jobs while it forces women to perform in order to gain a decent living. (Portsmouth FGD women, Portsmouth; FGD men, Roseau). The well-known underachievement of males in the education system is a symptom of deeper societal gender identities that allow men to be involved in the alternative, underground economy. It is more lucrative for men to drop out and engage in other activities such as hustling, gangs, drugs and drug trafficking, than to follow the “tediously” long journey of education and enter the professional life. Therefore the domain of risk-taking associated with illegal activities takes a masculine dimension. The national gender policy brings to attention the fact that “[r]egionally there is a perception that men who have a narrow skill base increasingly enter the shadowy world of illegal activity, such as the drugs trade, to generate income” (Dominica National Gender Policy 2006, 64).

Masculinities and men’s responsibility in society need to be understood in connection with the wider economic context. It appears that the loss of power for men corresponds to Dominica’s rapid loss of economic power. The slide of boys into illegality appears to be a consequence of fathers’ loss of economic power, especially in farming, after natural disasters caused by hurricane David in 1979. This disrupted not only the economy, but men’s families and occupational identity. One respondent

explained the dynamics between the economy, family and identities during the aftermath of Hurricane David.

The younger boys fall into the trap of earning money illegally. It is not so much the rising women, but the declining men. In terms of formal education, women increased their participation at a greater level than men. It is a decline of men as economic power...Hurricane David broke up families, dislocated people. We're still in social rebuilding phase. People migrated, farms were destroyed, farms collapsed and the market crises in Europe also [had] influence. There was major dislocation. That aspect of society was not really addressed. A lot of people were put in a certain position because of this disruptive situation. The model of the father, however, weakene [and] became more dispersed. Mothers drifted to university teaching. Within the traditional model of father working, mother rearing of children...fathers declined, mothers surfaced and the family collapsed. Rebuilding houses was addressed. Farming was addressed. The main reconstruction of family (migration related) was not addressed." (Interview, Dacamen).

The overall interpretation is that women have arrived to a "safe" space of equality while leaving men behind. They secured educational and professional achievements, which give them the freedom to decide on their relations with men. However, this does not translate into an overall balance of power between women and men. The country's national gender policy points out that the gender differentials in education do not translate into gender differentials in the distribution of poverty (Dominica National Gender Policy, Section 5.4, 2006, 88). In its preamble, the policy indicates that although the status of women is "relatively good" (Dominica National Gender Policy 2006, 61), "visible achievement of successful women masks the reality of those who are unable to break out of the cycle of childbearing, unstable relationships with men and endless poverty. It is evident that the majority of women labor long hours both inside and outside of the home, tolerating incredible uncertainties" (Mohammed and Perkins 1999 in DNGP 2006, 61). The policy further states that "[t]he plight of women with large families and inadequate male support can, nonetheless, be quite severe" (CDB/GOCD 2003 in DNGP 2006, 88).

In relation to violence, the policy acknowledges that "issues of family and gender-based violence are closely correlated" (DNGP 2006, 96). In fact, the term gender-based violence is used to indicate domestic violence or "wife beating." It becomes clear that there is a discrepancy between women's realities and the fact that the process of the policy implementation is concentrated on men. As one respondent pointed out,

You still have the perception that 'what is it that you women want? You have everything already.' And so that for me is the uphill battle that we're fighting. Whilst if we look outside of the box and you compare to what our situation is, in relation to some other nations, yes women have a lot of opportunities, but we still need more, it's not a want. We still need a lot more. We still need for women to be able to walk on the streets comfortably. We need for women to be able to find jobs and get the opportunities to do their work, and not be cast aside because you are a woman and so I am going to lose so many days of work because you going to have a period that may make you ill... that is what some of the employers actually think of. (Interview member of DNCW & Ministry of Agriculture gender focal point).

The national gender policy provides a space for the discourse in the region on equality for women and men. This equality discourse is meant to influence state policy. However, the discourse becomes about who is more marginalized, while it is clear that materially, ideologically and structurally power has not shifted, not even in relation to the implementation of the national gender policy.

The Marginalizing Effect of Gender: The Gender Machinery Within the State Apparatus

The gender focus of the Bureau's work leads to its physical removal from the state apparatus, which is detrimental for the significance of its work within the institutional infrastructure.

The bureau has an office that is far removed from the general government office, which sometimes I think is a disadvantage. Because you have the main government headquarters where you can find most of the ministries that make sense. The bureau is under the ministry of social services that covers community development, gender affairs, welfare, and they have the programme for the elderly, 'Yes We Care'. It's only the clerical staff that is placed at the government headquarters. The Department of Community Development is at one extreme of town. Bureau of Gender Affairs is at another extreme of town. The Welfare Department is in another separate building. But we are the ones dealing with the needs of the people in the community. So sometimes you wonder what is really going on?" (Interview, member of DNCW & Ministry of Agriculture gender focal point).

Such physical removal consequently corresponds to little power to determine the priority with which attention is given to the BGA initiatives, such as the gender policy. It has been actually mentioned that the governmental approach to social services,

such as social welfare, and social programs and projects is limited, which manifests into insufficient funding and human resources for institutions such as the BGA. Consequently, initiatives spearheaded by such institutions, such as the implementation of the gender policy are not properly considered at a general governmental level. As gender is “a social category that is ripe for manipulation” (Comments, Mohammed 2013) the gender policy does not represent an immediate and tangible interest for governmental officials. It rather opens up a space of political manouver, in terms of satisfying certain types of constituencies at a certain time in place, without government taking any concrete, sustainable action (Researcher’s field notes, 2013). An interview respondent for this chapter confirmed this observation,

One of the big problems across the Caribbean at least, [is that] the ministries that deal with social services are normally underfunded, understaffed and over worked. We are the ones that really look at the things that really move the country forward. The welfare of women, the welfare of children, the welfare of the elderly and the needs are always so much greater than what we can actually provide. Because you tend to find that at budget time, they would allocate more resources to the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Trade, to those that are more visible, but the ones that really are in need are paid the least attention. Sometimes we have to do a lot of what we want to do, not because of the money that is being offered, but because it’s almost as if you are on a mission. So you use what little resource you have and try to stretch it as much as possible to reach your goal (Interview, member of DNCW & Ministry of Agriculture gender focal point).

The Power of the Personal: The Intersection Between the Personal and the Institutional

The power of the personal becomes clear. Personal consciousness of gender issues guides professional interests and priorities, and become a factor that facilitate the “life” of the policy. The “mission”-like commitment of individuals in particular positions in certain departments or agencies of the government, or civil society organizations, who have a consciousness of gender implications become the steering wheel of the policy. One respondent explained, “[t]he policy on its own is a beautiful document. What drives the policy is the people who are implementing it” (Interview, member of DNCW & Ministry of Agriculture gender focal point). The lack thereof determines that the attention, and therefore funds and human resources are not put in place to support the policy (Researcher’s field notes 2013). For example, at

the time of drafting the gender policy, the minister of Social Services, Community Development and Gender Affairs understood the societal importance of a gender policy and supported its acceptance and launching by the country's cabinet. This political will proved to be a crucial ingredient for the "push" for the gender policy in Dominica (Interview, Esther Thomas). Moreover, the Bureau was viewed, among civil society and government circles, to be one person who is took the work of policy implementation as personal. The commitment to the policy became the driving force behind the gender policy initiative. In the "very small place" that Dominica is, (Interview, civil society activist and top level civil servant, Ministry of Health, National Drug Abuse Prevention) such dynamics are conducive to the policy becoming a personal document. "What you would find in the Dominican context is that you would see certain faces in almost every organization that you go to" (Interview Ministry of Health, National Drug Abuse Prevention). The smallness of the island leads to people being involved in the societal life in many ways---in different functions that gives them mobility, information and access to different networks. They wear different hats: a civil servant is an activist and a farmer; a lawyer is a columnist and a scholar; a member of the executive board of DNCW is also part of the BGA and the gender focal point for the Ministry of Agriculture; the president of CariMAN is serving at the same time in the MOE, and is also an educator. The small state impacts on interrelations and networking. The political becomes personal. Therefore the personal involvement by the BGA director in the policy implementation process indicates the format that feminist activism tends to take within the state apparatus in Dominica.

Divergent Policy Practices

The reality behind implementing the gender policy in Dominica shows that the policy is not much known or carefully considered among relevant stakeholders in the country, let alone practiced. As one respondent from the Planned Parenthood Association explained,

Most people may have a copy [of the national gender policy], but in terms of using it to implement, I think very few people do that. Some people may also know about it but may not even have a copy of it (Interview, family life educator, Planned Parenthood Association).

Such "use to implement" the national gender policy would entail inter alia making efforts to realize the policy document's stated goals. Our numerous discussions and interviews conducted with civil servants and civil society

representatives confirmed the accounts given above by the family life educator. The permanent secretary of the Ministry of Education (MOE), for instance, made clear that in relation to the education sector, the policy goal “to influence state policy on selected areas (one of which is education)” was still a goal in 2013 and its attainment was a future reference (DNGP 2006, Section 1.3, 14). Although gender equality was recognized as an area of priority in the ministry’s strategic plan to address the significant disparity in school performance along gender lines, the permanent secretary indicated that ministry had not used the policy yet.

We are not in the process of preparing a gender policy. We recognize gender as an issue and we have identified the gender issue in our strategic class....Definitely we have one of our strategic priority as mitigating the gender differences in performance of students. We may have to look a little more at what happens with the boys at school etc. However, we don't have a policy on that [gender equality] as yet. I am sure in the near future we may have to look at different policy perspectives on mitigating gender disparity (Interview, permanent secretary, MOE).

Knowledge of the policy text seems to be an essential aspect for its practice (Biholar 2013, 66-68, 269-272). Only a few number of professionals seem to pay attention to the national gender policy, and use it in their activities if their interests and priorities so require.

We have used the gender policy, though very limited. I cannot say that I have broad knowledge of the policy even myself, because I received it electronically a few months ago and I haven't had the time to go through it and analyze it and so on. So it's very limited in terms of our use of the policy and even in addressing the issues that we face at Planned Parenthood (Interview, family life educator, Planned Parenthood Association).

Another respondent learned about the existence of the national gender policy in Dominica more than five years after the policy was approved by cabinet and became a public document. She needed the policy text to support a fundraising proposal for a program to support young women. Drawing on local and regional documents to frame such fundraising proposals, and particularly referring to a national gender policy and the data therein, would raise the chances for gaining grants (Researcher’s field notes 2013).

I have used some of the data that is available in it as well as some of the reference made in it. I can use it if I'm seeking funding for programmes supporting young women. Especially when we're looking at gender-based

violence....In fact, I only got a copy because I was supposed to be on a radio programme (Interview, family life educator, Planned Parenthood Association).

Moreover, the policy, doubtlessly a public document, does not seem to be readily available, especially for civil society. In this case, the respondent owned a copy of the policy text because she was invited to make reference to it in a talk she gave in a radio programme. For that purpose, she was sent electronically a copy by the BGA.

They wanted me to make some reference to it [the National Gender Policy], so it was sent to me; but before that, I didn't have it. So that could probably happen with other people as well. So I think the gender bureau themselves should probably go on a drive to sensitize people about the policy and make it available. Make it available electronically, flash drive or on a DVD, so people can have it available. That is something they can consider (Interview, family life educator, Planned Parenthood Association).

The MOE gender focal point confirmed this account. She explained that she accessed parts of the policy, as they were made available to her during focused meetings for gender focal points, but she had not been able to access it on her own because the policy document was not easily available, such as via the internet.

Every time we go to meetings, we may have some parts of the policy that you are discussing handed out, but the entire document...I've never had the entire document. I remember they were saying that it was going to be online but I've never...honestly I cannot tell you, but I have never really had a copy in my hand to really peruse so that is one of the setbacks (Interview, Ministry of Education gender focal point).

Other respondents explained that the bureau has worked hard, “pushed and pushed” and largely disseminated the policy, especially at the ministerial level (Interview, Ministry of Health, 2013). The Ministry of Education gender focal point confirmed that the “team” of gender focal points had numerous meetings and consultations spearheaded by the director of the Bureau of Gender Affairs in an effort to “get the gender policy off the ground” (Interview, Ministry of Education, gender focal point). It also emerged that those that have a prior awareness of the importance of a gender policy stemming from a personal “thought processes” (Interview, Ministry of Health), personal conditioning and interests in advancing gender equality facilitate the life of the policy.

It was disseminated everywhere, as far as I know, to a lot of ministries. They [BGA] had meetings with different sectors. Because of my involvement, I'd go

to the meetings. I don't know about other persons, but as I said, the way you are socialized and conditioned, if I hear 'gender policy' I'd run because of my background. However, someone who never heard of the gender policy would hesitate before they participate (Interview, civil society activist and top level civil servant, Ministry of Health, National Drug Abuse Prevention).

The respondent, a former female senator, further explained that her education in women's studies opened up her personal interest in and consciousness of the implications of gender issues. This helped her navigate with confidence in a traditionally male dominated domain---politics---and resolve the tensions created by her presence.

One of my [focuses] was women's studies, so I was happy that I had that knowledge. If I didn't have that knowledge I probably would have been fearful around them [men in politics]. But I had that confidence and the knowledge of women being able to aspire, being able to tread where men have tread....I know when they were selecting the candidate, it was two of us in the community and he was very much upset that the people wanted me over him. So there was a little conflict there, but I was determined to go past that. It was because of the knowledge that I had, I told them I did women studies...so I was ready for that, the area....Well I think that I spoke loud and clear. I was labeled as a sort of feminist radical person, so I think I had spoken loud and clear that I was not afraid to venture....I think they respected me and probably admired me during that period. Even now as well (Interview, civil society activist and top level civil servant, Ministry of Health, National Drug Abuse Prevention).

Lack of such personal conditioning, interests, priorities or circumstances, however, make the policy a "forgotten text gathering dust on the shelf", although it has been made available. For example, when we asked the Ministry of Education permanent secretary about her experience with the national gender policy since it was launched and accepted by the cabinet, she confessed,

I have not really perused through the national gender policy on a broader scale. I don't know if it touches on education issues, but it would be an interesting document to look at in terms of what it really says in terms of the country. The thing about the national gender policy, I don't know how it was conceptualized...if it was just conceptualized from the Bureau of Gender Affairs, and how much stakeholders' participation there was in terms of the education contribution to the policy. I'm not sure of that and I would have to do more research (Interview, permanent secretary, Ministry of Education).

The national gender policy seems to be retrieved from the shelf if and when circumstances so require. It is known if and when it is required to be known, which reveals the contradictory condition of the policy as an instrument of action. The permanent secretary continued her confession,

Actually we have a meeting tomorrow to discuss the gender policy....Well to be honest with you, I need to read it; I have not honestly read it. So I'm going to print it, so I can bring it home to read it in preparation for the meeting with the consultant tomorrow. I shouldn't say I wasn't aware of it. I have to read up on the gender policy to see what it says (Interview, permanent secretary, Ministry of Education).

It becomes clear that interests, priorities and personal conditioning can open up opportunities for the implementation process. These contradictory accounts are indicative of the contradictory life of, and value given by different stakeholders in Dominica to the national gender policy. Despite the proposition in the policy document itself that the institutional framework should entail policy implementation that it is “an important concern for all citizens,” and the removal of “[t]he popular idea that national policy and plans, when formulated, will gather dust on a shelf” (DNGP 2006, Section 1.6, 16), the policy is generally limited to a written text only. It becomes a living instrument at the level of practitioners’ reality (civil society representatives or civil servants) only when it is required, or can help achieve a goal, depending on interests, priorities or personal conditioning or circumstances. As indicated at the Ministry of Education, the visit of a gender consultant and the urgency of meetings and consultations for the updating and acceleration of the policy implementation became one of those circumstances, priorities and interests when the policy was conveniently taken out from the shelf and came to life. It encouraged the MOE permanent secretary to learn about the policy and appropriate its content when it was necessary. Conversely, the lack of interest, priority, circumstance or personal conditioning, may impose blocks to this policy’s practice as well. Our findings therefore confirm that the state engages in what Patricia Mohammed coined as “politics of convenience”. In practice, governments and their representatives do not just deliver policy; they rather “seem to be invested in a democracy of convenience--- whether that convenience benefits the individual politician, or the collective sentiment of an influential group” (Mohammed 2014, 23). As one interview respondent for this chapter explained,

In terms of gender, it may take a while for even persons that know better.

Policy makers have to have the political will to give it support, so that we can see the changes we want to effect (Interview, civil society activist and top level civil servant, Ministry of Health, National Drug Abuse Prevention).

Policy Practice As a Continuous Policy Updating

It turns out that the policy represents multiple priorities and divergent practices. These competing priorities and practices consist of both personal and institutional interests, and understandings of what is necessary to be achieved in reality. As a consequence, the practice of gender policy seems to be a continuous updating of the policy text so that it represents the reality on the ground, and the reality of grassroots or civil servants' whose work relates to the gender policy.

The Dominica Government Information Service (GIS) announced on July 2, 2013 that the Bureau of Gender Affairs (BGA) was in a process of reviewing the national gender policy. At a public session on the reviewing process held at the end of June 2013, the Honorable Gloria Shillingford, minister for gender affairs mentioned: "The main aim of this updating exercise is to ensure that the policy takes on board recent developments at the national level; current data, information and analysis, for example the 2011 population census; and new and emerging gender equality issues in the society." The BGA director added, "What we hope to do now is to present again an updated version of the policy that will make it more relevant" (Dominica GIS 2013).

Once accepted, adopted and launched, the policy has a life of its own. The implementation process seems to involve updating the text according to the lived realities on the ground. Relationships, priorities and entrenched interests direct the practice of the policy implementation process. In Dominica, there were consultations with civil servants, permanent secretaries (PSs), gender focal points (GFPs), CSOs and grassroots groups. There were initiatives to accelerate and update the implementation of the policy. It was pointed out in the GIS announcement that

[a]ccording to Honorable Shillingford, in order to confront these new developments in society as it relates to gender issues, government has contracted an international gender specialist to aid in the venture. [The consultant] had visited Dominica periodically since March 2013 to pursue work on this assignment....During this time she has conducted a series of public awareness consultations on the national gender policy at the national and district levels with a wide range of stakeholders including the public sector, private sector, labour, civil society, nongovernmental community

based organizations and faith-based organizations (Dominica GIS 2013).

The policy becomes therefore a combination between policy goals on paper, and a vivid update of those goals to resonate with current realities. What the policy provides is a narrative of what has occurred in practice, instead of being a guideline for the practice. An example of this is the BGA's effort to accelerate the implementation of the gender policy by bringing it up to date according to the realities on the ground. An external gender consultant was brought in the country and meetings with diverse stakeholders such as GFPs and PSs of the various ministries, as well as grassroots women and men were organized so that life realities of constituents were acknowledged and incorporated in the policy.

The policy thus becomes a system of representation of lived realities. Resonance of the policy with such realities renders its implementation feasible. Thus, it is the realities of relevant stakeholders on the ground that circumscribe and determine the policy implementation process, rather than the policy text itself. The unfamiliarity with the policy content of some of those public sector stakeholders who participated in the discussion on the gender policy stands as evidence.

Limitations To the Practice of Gender Policy: Financial Resources

There are clear disjunctures between women's and men's groups in terms of the financial support they receive or have access to. The women's cause does not seem to attract the attention for funding to keep their work going, impeding the ongoing battle against violence. Intriguingly, while women's groups, such as DNCW, and the government's machinery for gender equality, the BGA, struggle for funds, the men's group CariMAN and its initiatives focusing on men and boys, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, acquire funds easily, especially from UNWOMEN (Interview CariMAN member; Field observations 2013; Researcher's field notes 2013). Some would say that this is because the focus on men is "something new", similar to the novelty of the women's cause in the 70s. Therefore, the interests of funders come into play as well. They determine the priority areas in which more efforts are placed, thus shaping the intended direction of policy implementation. For example, the bureau is located at the end of one of the few main streets in Roseau, Independence Street, in the white and blue building that is commonly known as the Globe Building. An old friend of the director owns the building---somebody who she knows and visits from time to time. The director indicated that due to the kindness of this friend, the bureau has a space from where it can operate. When women call seeking refuge

from abusive situations, the bureau calls the DNCW to find a space. Most of the times, this space is the home of the NGO personnel since there is no funding or political will to keep at least one shelter for battered women running (Researcher's fieldnotes 2013).

Most of the times we met with BGA director, she reminded us that "we are few" at BGA, "you can see our capacity", implying that there is an overload of work and not sufficient human resources to deal with it (Interview, BGA 2013). When we asked permission to interview someone from the technical staff personnel, the director smiled. Later, she mentioned that they do not have enough human resources. The need to strengthen the technical personnel is acknowledged, but the lack of financial resources is yet again standing in the way (Discussion, BGA 2013).

Lack of financial resources, therefore, is a clear limitation to gender policy implementation. This scarcity of funding leads to lack of sustainability of action. Insufficient funding is also accompanied by insufficient time allocated in the ministries to issues related to gender.

Conclusion

This chapter focused on the process of implementating the national gender policy and its ability to secure greater gender justice in the context of the Commonwealth of Dominica. It discussed the ways the process of gender policy implementation reveals the negotiation of meanings and perspectives on masculinities, women's status and rights, and gender justice. The chapter paid particular attention to the ways in which interpretations of the gendered realities of boys and men, and their place within gendered power relations, shape the practice of implementing the national gender policy.

The research for this chapter conducted in Dominica revealed that the successful implementation for national gender policies requires, in essence, the acquisition and production of meaning at the levels of governmental agencies, civil society organizations, and individuals as the beneficiaries of the gender policy. This makes it possible to internalize, process and practice the policy itself. In the particular context of the gender policy in Dominica, and in the wider context of the Caribbean, paying attention to and incorporating masculinity concerns, questions about men and boys in the policy text created a policy resonant with the gendered realities in the region. Moreover, the understanding of the concept of gender that is inclusive of men is opened up by such national gender policies. The chapter argued that such understanding of gender enabled a space for multiple and competing interpretations

of women's and men's gendered realities and relations of power in both the policy document and in the public discourse. Therefore, (a) interpretations of men as disempowered and silenced in their gendered experience coexisting with perceptions of men as the powerful gender; (b) interpretations of women as advanced and empowered at the detriment of men competing with understandings of women as the subject of gender inequality and still having a low status; (c) men's priority to provide spaces for men to discuss their issues and feelings of powerlessness in order to empower and 'un-silence' them prevailing over men's critique and transformation of their unequal status competing with (d) men's priority to ally with women activists to transform their own unequal status, forms the discursive terrain, which shaped the process of policy implementation in Dominica.

Furthering the discussion on gender, the chapter shows that the social category of gender became an entry for men to join the equality discourse. It opens up a domain of agency for men in a masculinist environment, by which they can pay attention to their identity and negotiate with the patriarchal state for re-consideration of their societal position. This is because the masculinist nature of the state and society, through the centring of men, partly obscured their gendered experiences and condemned them to invisibility.

While a space for men's empowerment, gender also emerged as a space for women's contestation of their inequality. Perceptions that gender meant women-only led to the relegation of the policy to a marginal place within the state bureaucracy, confirming the patriarchal arrangements of the Dominican society. Therefore, the marginality of the gender machinery within the state apparatus and of the gender policy made the practice of the policy a future projection rather than concrete, present action. As a consequence, the institutional intersected with the personal. Feminist activists within the state gender machinery needed to engage in extensive personal advocacy in order to be able to give life to the national gender policy.

In terms of gender equality, the discussion revealed that policy implementation becomes a space for a multi-layered empowerment of men to escape on one hand old stereotypes, and on the other hand to challenge gender inequalities. Men seemed to enter the conversation on gender equality through strategic initiatives comprising alliances with women's rights, building up on women groups' experiences, and working with women on the elimination of violence. It is important to note that in doing so men organizations collaborate with feminist organizations and promote a feminist agenda of gender equality. In the case of CariMAN in Dominica, not only internal political will, but also the interest of UNWOMEN, represented a springboard for the work of CariMAN on gender equality. The research showed that

men organizations publicly promoted the discourse of the feminist donor on gender equality, and strived to meet the donor's requirements of equality ideas and understandings, notwithstanding that these ideas and understandings are not necessarily similar to the private discourse within these organizations. The lesson from the collaboration between UNWOMEN and CariMAN in Dominica is that the mobilization of men around the idea of gender justice and for the implementation of the gender policy was a strategy employed by feminist advocates to make the policy successful. However, although feminist activists lead the process of policy implementation to achieve gender justice and although feminist activist organizations fund gender equality initiatives undertaken by men's organizations in the Caribbean, it emerged that feminism and feminist analysis still face resistance, sometimes hostile, from some men activists.

The chapter therefore argues that gender represents a space for strategic manoeuvres, which allows women to continue their work for enjoying equality and human rights, while it enables "men to feel less threatened and speak about their issues" (Interview, civil society activist and top level civil servant, Ministry of Health, National Drug Abuse Prevention 2013). The policy goals of gender equality and transformation of prevailing gender relations, however, are not necessarily met through the shift in the gender policy focus on men and masculinity. It is only when society overcomes patriarchal ideologies, dichotomous gender identities and imbalances of power that gender justice is achieved. It seems the competing interpretations and interests during the gender policy implementation practice in the country actually led to the perpetuation rather than eradication of "asymmetries of access to status, power and material resources" (Barriteau 2001, 26). This supports Barriteau's assertion that shifts in material resources must correspond to shifts in ideologies for challenging structural inequalities, avoiding gender tensions and bringing about real transformation of gender relations. (Barriteau 2001, 28; CEDAW, Ciudad Jaurez Report 2005, para. 35).

Understandings that gender inequality affects negatively both girls and boys, and women and men (Figuroa 2004; Barriteau 2000; Chevannes 2001; Plummer 2010) compete in both scholarship and public discourse with discourses surrounding male marginalization (Miller 1991). This indicates that it is important to attend, through national gender policies, to competing approaches to men's role in challenging gender inequality and achieving social change.

Furthermore, the chapter showed that the policy practice within the state apparatus is not a homogenous process. Instead, it is comprised by multiple and divergent relationships, interests, priorities, conveniences and negotiations, which

shape the policy implementation as a complex discursive terrain. It is therefore important to note that the implementation of the gender policy is rather a continuous updating of policy text so that it represents the multiple and divergent interests and priorities on the ground. Coupling interests, priorities and conveniences with fixed understandings of the construction of gender roles, the asymmetry of gender relations, and misunderstandings of the concept of gender as referring to only women, contributes to the gender policy being overlooked as an important state instrument. The Dominica case study makes clear that personal conditioning, interests, priorities or circumstances encourage the implementation of the policy. Data from the field shows that the national gender policy in Dominica was usually only read if and when it was so required, thus indicating the contradictory condition of the policy as an instrument of action.

Overall, women's advancements are visible, however, the hegemony of patriarchal ideologies and asymmetric power relations is invisible, hence difficult to grasp. The hegemonic discourse during the national gender policy implementation process became that women are dominant and men are marginal, even though data reveals this is not the case. This chapter argues, therefore, that fixed understandings of gender roles, asymmetric gender relations, and misunderstandings that the concept of gender refers only to women while obscuring men, present resistances to implementing the national gender policy as a means to advance gender justice.

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Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Social Services, Community Development and Gender Affairs, May 1, 2013.

Women's Nongovernmental Organizations

President of Dominica National Council of Women (DNCW), March 18, 2013.
Member of Dominica National Council of Women (DNCW) & Ministry of Agriculture gender focal point, March 18, 2013.

Juvenile Court and Maintenance Matters

Magistrate Juvenile Court and Maintenance Matters, April 30, 2013.

Radio Programs

Bureau of Gender Affairs officer and radio moderator, 'Women's Magazine', April 26, 2013.
Former radio moderator, 'Women's Magazine', May 23, 2013.
Journalist and radio moderator 'Talking Gender', May 1, 2013.

The University of the West Indies

Discussion open campus, March 7, 2013.

Focus Group Discussions (FGD)

Fathers, Roseau town, May 22, 2013.
Grassroots women, Portsmouth, May 18, 2013.
Men, Roseau, May 24, 2013.

Field Notes

Researcher's field notes, Planned Parenthood Association, February 26, 2013.
Researcher's field notes, BGA, March 14, 2013.
Researcher's field notes, Sexual minority rights activist and CariMAN member February 23, 2013.
Researcher's field notes, interview CariMAN members, April 11, 2013.

Researcher's field notes, CariMAN, April 20, 2013.
Researcher's field notes, interview CariMAN member, April 22, 2013.
Researcher's field notes, BGA, February 22, 2013.
Researcher's field notes, Roseau, May 2013.
Researcher's field notes, CariMAN member, April 15, 2013.
Researcher's field notes, minority rights activist and CariMAN member, March 12, 2013.
Researcher's field notes, DNCW & GFP Ministry Of Agriculture, March 18, 2013.
Researcher's field notes, DNCW, March 15, 2013.
Researcher's field notes, DNCW, March 18, 2013.
Researcher's field notes, family planning unit, Catholic Centre, April 23, 2013.
Researcher's field notes, Ministry of Education, March 19, 2013.
Researcher's field notes, Social Welfare Division, March 15, 2013.
Researcher's field notes, CariMAN member on lack of data on Dominican men, May 17, 2013.
Researcher's field notes, the Dominica statistics office, May 23, 2013.
Researcher's field notes, FGD with fathers, May 22, 2013.
Researcher's field notes, BGA Pannel Discussion on International Women's Day, March 7, 2013.

Field Observations

Observations, BGA Pannel Discussion on International Women's Day, March 7, 2013.
Observations, BGA NGP grassroots consultation, Portsmouth, April 22, 2013.

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