

## THE POWER OF PLEASURE: HUMAN SEXUAL PRACTICES IN BARBADIAN SOCIETY

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### ABSTRACT

*I argue that, issues on human sexuality within the Caribbean are approached from a stereotypical, pathological or judgmental perspective. This approach leaves out an important aspect of human sexuality which is pleasure. This kind of pleasure is silenced, repressed, demonized, and controlled through hegemonic discourses. Within Barbadian society in particular matters around human sexuality are constructed as activities that should only be practiced within the private sphere among adult, married heterosexuals. As it relates to issues of sexual pleasure there is a societal muteness on the matter, even though individuals are privately engaged in giving and receiving sexual pleasure. On occasions when there is an effort to bring sexual pleasure into popular discourse this is immediately silenced, repressed, and or sanctioned by the powers that be. It is the intention with this paper to begin a frank and open scholarly discussion on the many ways Barbadians give and expect sexual pleasure.*

### KEYWORDS

Caribbean sexuality, Barbados, Barbadian sexual practices, sexual pleasure, social control, social repression, human sexuality, sexual repression.

Michel Foucault whose work examines Europe's hypocrisy about human sexuality in *The History of Sexuality*, explains that the control and repression of human sexuality began during the Victorian era (Foucault 3). The Victorian era imposed a restricted and organized display of human sexuality within the private sphere with new constructs such as the family where the aspect of pleasure was removed.

The Victorian era controlled human sexuality through what Foucault calls the 'repressive hypothesis' where 'Repression operated as a sentence to disappear. But also as a injunction to silence, an affirmation of non-existence, and by implication, an admission that there was nothing to say about such things, nothing to see, and nothing to know' (Foucault 4).

Foucault's analysis lays the foundation in understanding some of the reasons for human sexual repression within Caribbean societies, and in particular Barbadian society. The institutionalized repression by the status quo not only demonized some human sexual practices, but made unnatural that which is natural, pathologizing erotic feelings, sexual behaviours and other expressions of human sexuality using, for its domination to be effective, one of its main social institution, the Christian Church.

The association by the Christian dogma of sexual intercourse with evil and sin implies that human intimate sexual encounters with pleasure as the ultimate goal should be considered immoral and corrupt. Unfortunately the English-speaking Caribbean as former colonies of the Western world inherited the Victorian ideology of sexual repression with the establishment/imposition of the different Christian denominations in the New World.<sup>1</sup>

Recognizing this, should come as no surprise when Caribbean societies display attitudes of control and disgust, especially when issues related to sexual pleasure find themselves into the public domain. This was recently seen after a statement by no other than Barbadian Anglican Priest Rev. Charles Morris on early May 2011<sup>2</sup> which introduced a discourse on premarital sex.

This introduction of premarital sex into popular discourse it is feared will give license to the presupposed seeking and giving of sexual pleasure for the sole purpose of sexual enjoyment. This cannot be accepted within hegemonic discourses of sexual repression.<sup>3</sup>

The presupposition of Rev Morris and the angry reaction in some cases from some individuals from the larger society and representatives of the Christian church strengthens the main argument for the development of this

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<sup>1</sup> See Catherine A., Sunshine. (1985). *The Caribbean: Survival, Struggle and Sovereignty*. Washington D.C.; Ecumenical Program on Central America and the Caribbean (EPICA), Part One "Collaborative Role of the Colonial Church". 16-18.

<sup>2</sup>For more on the heated reactions see Corey, Worrell. "My Pig in a Blanket". *Daily Nation*. Thursday May 12, 2011. 8, Bryan Walker. "Rebuked! Ministers Rap Priest Over Sex Position". *Sunday Sun*. May 15, 2011. Front Page, 24 -25A, Bryan, Walker. "No to Premarital Sex." *Sunday Sun*. May 15, 2011. 22-23A, Wayne, Webster. "Let Down by Anglican Priest." *Sunday Sun*. May 15, 2011. 24 A, Cornelius, Bartlett. "No Such Thing as Sex Before Marriage." *Sunday Sun*. May 15, 2011. 24, Ricky Jordan. "Morris Too Far Left on Sex Issue". *Daily Nation*, Monday May 16, 2011. 11, Clayton Hadaway. "Rev Morris is Speaking Truth". *Daily Nation*. Tuesday May 17, 2011. 9-10, Ridley, Green. "Sex Post-Haste?" *Midweek Nation*. Wednesday May 18, 2011. 8, Carol, Martindale. "Split Over Sex Before Vows: Morris' Views Still Sparking Debate". *Midweek Nation*. Wednesday May 18, 2011. 35A, *Saturday Sun*. May 21, 2011. 10. Cartoon, *Sunday Sun*. May 22, 2011. 9A. Cartoon, R. E. Guyson Mayers. "Sex and Sin". *The Barbados Advocate*. Sunday May 22, 2001. 11, Bryan, Walker. "To Wait or Not to Wait: Impact of Premarital Sex on Society." *Sunday Sun*. May 22, 2011. 27A, Harry, Russell. "This Sex Thing." *Daily Nation*. Monday May 23, 2011. 8, Ask Dr. Ruth. "Frustrated with Being Cut Off". *Saturday Sun*. May 28, 2011. 36.

<sup>3</sup> See Michael, Foucault. (1990). *The Use of Pleasure: The History of Sexuality*. Vol. 2 Introduction. New York: Vintage Book a Division of Random House, 3-32, Peter, Brown. "Bodies and Mind: Sexuality and Renunciation in Early Christianity". (2002). In *Sexualities in History: A Reader*. Kim M. Phillips, and Barry Reay. Eds. New York, London: Routledge, 129-140.

paper which is that the status quo recognized and is afraid of the power which is inherent in human sexual desire and which results in sexual pleasure, and were therefore utilizing all its institutions to manage, repress and control human sexuality.<sup>4</sup>

Celia Kitzinger's "Problematizing Pleasure: Radical Feminist Deconstructions of Sexuality and Power", briefly defined sexual pleasure as 'the cycle of arousal, desire and orgasm' (Kitzinger 195).

I define sexual pleasure as a combination of sexual thoughts, feelings and actions which are experienced from the mind and/or the entire body of an individual, and/or shared from the bodies, and the mind of others. Humans are pleasure seekers and will pursue material, human and emotional objects and subjects in order to satisfy their desires obtaining pleasure as the ultimate goal.

Of all the pleasurable goals it is, the sexual pleasure which seems problematic for the status quo who with the use of hegemonic power tries to impose and curtail the force/ power that is found in sexual pleasure seeking.

According to Rafael Ramirez in "Masculinity and Power in Puerto Rico", 'Power is generally considered to be the capacity to dominate, repress, control, and subordinate the acts and desires of others' (Ramirez 239). On the other hand Foucault, in *History of Sexuality*, who analyzes the approach to human sexuality from the perspective of power explains that this power,

Must be understood in the first instance as the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization; as the process which, through ceaseless struggles and confrontations, transforms, strengthens, or reverses them...(Foucault 92).

The general definition of power offered by Ramirez does not give agency to those who are being dominated, while Foucault's analysis demonstrates a dynamic interplay of power and resistance which not only create struggles and confrontations but can also result in social empowerment as in the case of changing discriminatory legislations against particular groups within societies, with the hope that the dynamic struggle would also be transformative.

This interplay of power and domination is possible because as Foucault continues, 'power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere' (Foucault 93). If we accept that power is 'everywhere' then we can understand the resistance of individuals against hegemonic power because it suggests that among groups and individuals who are not in hierarchical position there is a certain degree of power.

And if power 'comes from everywhere' it can also be argued as it relates to human sexuality that it can be an element in sexual desire and the pursuit of pleasure. This power which 'comes from everywhere' introduces the

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<sup>4</sup> See Stephen, Garton. (2004). "Normalizing Sexuality". In *Histories of Sexuality*. New York: Routledge, 189-209, Peter N. Stearns. (2009). *Sexuality in World History*. London and New York: Routledge, Listen to calypsonian Mac Fingall 2011 song "Must There be Sex Before Marriage?"

second argument for the discussion in this paper which is that despite hegemonic discourses and systems of control individuals find ways of using the power of desire to engage in those sexual activities which gives them pleasure, because 'where there is power,<sup>5</sup> there is resistance' (Foucault 95).

This paper will not focus on exploring the different ways power and desire are displayed within societies or analyzing the role of the Christian church in human sexual repression. The paper will focus on how Barbadian society resist hegemonic discourses on human sexuality, and demonstrate the power/force of sexual desire and pleasure in human sexual practices within Barbadian society. The power of pleasure that is referred to is more a force than an exercise of power by a few over a majority.

During the month of April of 2011 exploratory in-depth interviews were done with a focus on issues in human sexuality within the Barbadian society. The analysis is based on two main questions; do Barbadians find sexual intercourse pleasurable? And what would be some overt and covert sexual practices despite a hegemonic ideology of sexual repression? See table 1.

### **Caribbean Scholarship on Human Sexuality**

One of my critiques of the literature which focuses on sexuality in the Caribbean is that it leaves out the aspect of pleasure. Before the HIV-AIDS pandemic especially history scholarship while not focusing specifically on human sexuality, could not avoid its indirect reference due to the relationship of power, domination, and especially female sexual exploitation beginning from the period of slavery.

The work of Hilary Beckles *Centering Women: Gender Discourses in Caribbean Slave Society*, Lucille Mathurin Mair *A Historical Study of Women in Jamaica 1655-1844*, Nicole Phillips *Producers, Reproducers and Rebels: Grenadian Slave Women 1783-1838*, and Douglas, Hall. *In Miserable Slavery: Thomas Thistlewood in Jamaica 1750-86* discuss issues associated with sexual exploitation of women through rape, prostitution, and forced maternity among other related issues.

Within feminist scholarship Tara Atluri, *When the Closet is a Region: Homophobia, Heterosexism and Nationalism in the Commonwealth Caribbean*, 'noticed an overwhelming lack of Caribbean feminist scholarship, which attempts to address issues of sexuality' (Atluri 2001. 5). Jenny Sharpe and Samantha Pinto, "The Sweetest Taboo: Studies of Caribbean Sexualities; A Review", comments 'the study of sexuality in the Caribbean has historically been taboo, off-limits for scholarly research' (Sharpe and Pinto 2006. 17).

Other publications which deal with a variety of issues of human sexuality in the Caribbean include Nelson A. Waithe, *Caribbean Sexuality*, Joan M. Rawlins, "Middle -Aged and Older Women in Jamaica"; and Barry Chevannes, "Gender and Adult Sexuality"; Kamala Kempadoo *Sun, Sex, and Gold: Tourism and Sex Work in the Caribbean*, and *Sexing the Caribbean*.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Read here hegemonic power.

<sup>6</sup>See other focuses in Caribbean scholarship Allen, Caroline F. "Caribbean Bodies: Representation and Practice". (1998) In *Caribbean Portraits. Essays on Gender Ideologies and Identities*. Christine Barrow ed. Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers with The Centre for Gender and Development Studies, University of the West Indies, 276-293, Bryce, Jane.

The focus of scholarship on Caribbean sexuality at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is noticeable in Linden Lewis, *The Culture of Gender and Sexuality in the Caribbean*, Jacqui Alexander, et al in *Pedagogies of Crossing: Meditations on Feminism, Sexual Politics, Memory, and the Sacred (Perverse Modernities)*, the *Caribbean Review of Gender Studies*, and Kamala, Kempadoo, in *Power, Labour, Pleasure: Sexuality in Everyday Life*.<sup>7</sup>

There is the prevalent approach within the most recent publications in the Caribbean on the issue of human sexuality as pathology. Roberts, Reddock, Douglas and Reid, in *Sex, Power and Taboo: Gender and HIV in the Caribbean and Beyond*, investigate ‘the relationship between gender and sexuality in the Caribbean and in other regions in order to illuminate the impact of gender on HIV risk and prevention’ (Roberts et al 2009 x).<sup>8</sup> Christine, Barrow et al in *Sexuality, Social Exclusion and Human Rights: Vulnerability in the Caribbean Context of HIV* also focus on the ‘risk, sexuality, rights, power, culture and vulnerability in the context of the epidemic of HIV in the Caribbean’ (Barrow et al xvii).

It is this approach while not negating its value and urgency, makes me uncomfortable, that scholarly action is taken on issues related to human sexuality, only when it is deemed as pathologic or deviant. Foucault’s discussion of the repressive hypothesis helps to understand this approach, suggesting or rather highlighting within Caribbean feminist and human sexuality scholarship that probably there has not been liberation from hegemonic discourses of repression.

There is a dearth of scholarship specific to Barbados on general issues on human sexuality David A. B. Murray, “Bajan Queens, Nebulous Scenes: Sexual Diversity in Barbados”, makes a contribution to the scholarly work on same sex with a focus on “queens” within the Barbadian society. His “Who’s Right? Human Rights, Sexual

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“Young ting is the Name of the Game: Sexual Dynamics in a Caribbean Romantic Fiction Series”. (1998). In *Caribbean Portraits. Essays on Gender Ideologies and Identities*. Christine Barrow. Ed. Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers with The Centre for Gender and Development Studies, University of the West Indies, 320-338, Denise deCaires Narain. (1998) “Body Talk: Writing and Speaking the Body in the Text of Caribbean Women Writers”. In *Caribbean Portraits. Essays on Gender Ideologies and Identities*. Christine Barrow. Ed. Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers with The Centre for Gender and Development Studies, University of the West Indies, 255-276, M. Jacqui Alexander. (1997). “Erotic Autonomy as a Politics of Decolonization: An Anatomy of Feminist and State Practice in the Bahamas Tourism Economy’. In *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*. Eds. M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty. New York and London: 63-100.

<sup>7</sup>See also Carolyn, Cooper. (2004). “‘Mama Is That You?’: Erotic Disguise in the Films Dancehall Queen and Babymother”. In *Gender in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Caribbean Perspectives, Visions and Possibilities*. Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers. 262-280, Kevin, Frank. (2007) “Female Agency and Oppression in Caribbean Bacchanalian Culture: Soca, Carnival, and Dancehall.” *Women’s Studies Quarterly*. Spring 35, 1 and 2, 172-190, Wekker, Gloria. *The Politics of Passion: Women’s Sexual Culture in the Afro-Surinamese Diaspora*. Columbia University Press, 2006.

<sup>8</sup> A regional conference was held during May 4-6, 2011 at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago, “Understanding and Preventing Child Sexual Abuse and HIV Risk: Presentation of Research Findings and an Intervention Model”. These findings are the result of Break the Silence: end Child Sexual Abuse action research project on child sexual abuse by IGDS, St. Augustine.

Rights and Social Change in Barbados” discusses the different meanings of rights as they relate to sexual orientation.

Joan L. Phillips in “Tourist-Oriented Prostitution in Barbados: The Case of the Beach Boy and the White Female Tourist”. Phillips’s study discusses prostitution in Barbados among a specific group of men, the beach boys.<sup>9</sup> On the contrary there has been a proliferation of conference papers, and publications in medical journals which focus on risk and illness resulting from HIV.<sup>10</sup>

### **Exploring Barbadian Social Terrain**

While most of the interviewees admit of not having any problem engaging in conversation related to sex and sexuality in further analysis it is noted that at the general societal level sex and sexuality is not a casual conversation, and there are time and places for such type of discussion.

The woman from the parish of St. James explains, ‘you learn how to speak about it in a dignified way. I ain’t going come out and talk anything raw like that. If is a certain environment then I will know how to talk about it in a dignified way if I need to’ (38 year old woman, 2011).

Of the nine people interviewed only one indicated feeling uncomfortable. A 44 years old woman from the parish of St. George comments ‘I don’t have a problem listening, but it is the talking that I have a problem with’ (44-year-old woman, 2011). She continues to explain,

‘I can get uncomfortable somewhere along the line. Depends on the environment that I am in, this one right now makes me uncomfortable. Comfortable will be, I would have to be talking with somebody I am close to like my husband, I really don’t discuss sex with any body else not even my mother’ (44- year-old woman 2011).

This intervention by a 44 year woman underscores the effectiveness of the influence of the repressive Victorian age in our present everyday lives, as Foucault referred to. The fact that she doesn’t even discuss these issues with her mother strengthens Foucault’s argument about the repression of silence especially as it relates to children. Foucault sarcastically notes that ‘everyone knew, for example, that children had no sex, which was why they were forbidden to talk about it (Foucault 1990. 4).

The previous comment from the 44-year-old woman also highlights spatial boundaries where issues of sexual pleasure are allowed to be discussed only within the private sphere and with the spouse which confirms Foucault’s previous comment on sexuality being ‘carefully confined into the home’, where ‘the conjugal family took custody of it’.

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<sup>9</sup> See also Dann, Graham. (1987). *The Barbadian Male: Sexual Attitudes and Practice*. London and Basingstoke: Macmillan Publishers., 5-30, 55-70.

<sup>10</sup>See compilation done by UWI HARP, Cave Hill Campus, Barbados of selected bibliography on HIV and AIDS from 2001-2006 which includes journal publications, thesis and conference papers.

That children are not allowed to engage in sexual intercourse should not mean that they would not be curious or want to explore their own bodies.<sup>11</sup> Precisely because of this restriction imposed on children, many when approaching puberty and later adulthood find it more comfortable to listen in order to get some knowledge about human sexuality in general.

Another woman from the parish of St. Michael shares, ‘because most of us don’t come up in an environment where the parents actually sit down and have a discussion sexually, so will only hear it from a group that you are in, like how we here sitting down now and talk about it’ (47-year-old woman, 2011).

Despite the repressive discourse of non-sexual verbal disclosure within Barbadian society, Barbadians have a number of terms to identify female and male sexual organs that are widely used. See table 2.

Some respondents because they considered some of these as “curse” words only mentioned the first letter of the word, as in the case of the 38-year-old woman from the parish of St. James who interjects, ‘I can’t give you the next one because I don’t curse... would have to give with C,<sup>12</sup> the other P<sup>13</sup> word’. One of the interviewees went on to explain ‘that is an actual word that mean prison cell, but it never used for that cell thing, it always use for the vagina’ (44-year-old woman, 2011).

This intervention opens up another discussion about the social construction of language which determines which are “bad” or “good” words. Note that the woman had no problems pronouncing the word ‘vagina’ in her explanation but would not use the words ‘pussy’ or ‘cunt’.

Note how the terms are engendered, the terms used to refer to the female sexual organ are related to passive animals like the household cat or to small spaces, while on the other hand for the male sexual organ most of the references denote power and aggression.

Other respondents were a bit uncomfortable listing the terms when I asked them to do so even when some admitted to having favorite ones they would use. Another woman from the parish of St. James comments, ‘I use wood, cock’ (36-year-old woman). While not liking one of the terms used for women’s sexual organ, she goes on to comment ‘most of the time I just hear pussy. I think it is very bruaik! (expression of disgust) but dah is wah I hear. I hardly hear anything else’ (36-year-old woman, 2011).

Beside the terms previously mentioned interviewees went along listing some of the popular expressions used during sexual intercourse. See table 3.

### **Control of Barbadian Human Sexuality**

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<sup>11</sup> We are not referring to children who are sexually abused.

<sup>12</sup> She is referring to the use of the term Cunt.

<sup>13</sup> She is referring to the use of the term Pokey.

I argue that one of the reasons why some Barbadian individuals find it uncomfortable to openly speak about issues related to human sexuality especially those related to human sexual pleasure is because of societal control.

The way how the Barbadian status quo controls society's expressions of desire and pleasure is no different from other historic and current societies through which the patriarchal system ensures it to keep especially women and homosexuals in their place.

Societies not only control aspects of homosexuality and heterosexuality but also birth, abortion which is related to population growth<sup>14</sup> and sexual health which is related to prostitution<sup>15</sup>.

Within the Barbadian society ever so often the discourse about maternity will appear in the local newspapers regretting the fact that women are delaying pregnancy to further their education. Other related issues of social control in Barbadian society focus on gay marriage, abortion, and dress.<sup>16</sup>

### **Human Sexual Practices in Barbadian Society**

Admitting that issues of human sexuality and especially those related to pleasure are not discussed openly interviewees commented that they believed that most Barbadians were enjoying sexual intercourse and other sexual pleasures. This speaks to Foucault's resistance to power referred to in this paper as hegemonic power.

Responding to the question about enjoying sexual intercourse two of the women interviewed explain,

'I think it is 50/50' (38-year-old woman, 2011). 'I think a lot of young people just do it because is the thing to do. But for the mature people I think they find pleasure in it. The young people just doing it because every body else is doing it so.'<sup>17</sup> Then you have those who doing it for money, I am not actually sure if they enjoy the money they make, you need to go to Bush Hill<sup>18</sup> (laughter) (44-year-old woman, 2011).

<sup>14</sup> See Nira Yuval-Davis. (1997). *Gender and Nation*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

<sup>15</sup> See Philip Garton discussion on the prostitution during the Victorian era.

<sup>16</sup> See Carol-Ann, Tudor. "Do you Believe a Person Can be Gay and Christian?". *Sunday Sun*. March 22, 2009. 10A, Michelle, Springer. "With Gay Abandon?" *Sunday Sun*. March 22, 2009. 10A, Easy "The Church's Stance on Abortion". Sunday April 12, 2009. 6-7 Donna, Sealy. "Dress Stress: Some People Turn Away from Registration Department". Thursday October 8, 2009. Front page, *Weekend Nation*. "Schools no Place for Condoms". Friday March 11, 2011. 40, Trevor R., Shepherd. "Legalization no Answer to Problem". *The Barbados Advocate*. Sunday February 25, 2001, *Saturday Sun*. "Pull up yu pants, no selling round here!". Cartoon. February 27, 2010. 10, Barry, Alleyne. "Todd: Declare Sexual Habits". *Midweek Nation*. Wednesday December 17, 2008. 5A, Phillipe, Aimey. "Sex Likes 'Nobody's Business': BFPA Head, Unionist Scoff at Todd's Call to MPs". Friday December 19, 2008. 4, *The Barbados Advocate*. "National PTA Head Says Bullying and Homosexuality in Schools Worrying". Tuesday February 1, 2011. 3. See also *Sexual Offences Act 1992/1998*.

<sup>17</sup> See Karin, Dear. "Quick sex-Teen's latest fad. *Sunday Advocate*. February 27, 2000. 6.

<sup>18</sup> Bush Hill is one of the re-known areas for soliciting prostitutes.

With this comment three issues are noticeable. One is the suggestion that mature people are enjoying sexual intercourse; the second is that young people are engaged in having sexual intercourse but are not enjoying it; and third that, others are commercializing sexual intercourse but there is no assurance that they are getting any pleasure out of it.

A different perspective is put forward by T Gender girl who is suggesting that sexual pleasure is the primary purpose for a pursuit. She comments,

‘Yes it is. Actually it is very, very pleasurable to the point where it is actually first when they meet people it is a sexual thing first, then it comes then to a friendship...’ (41-year-old T-Gender girl, 2011).

T Gender girl is stating that the pursuing of sexual intercourse is the prelude to sexual pleasure, suggesting that there is no need of other socially constructed attached emotion for this to be achieved. It is also suggesting that if the encounters continue a friendship is likely to develop.

Based on the information gathered, despite the keepers of “morality”<sup>19</sup> Barbadians are engaged in all sorts of human sexual practices in order to give and receive pleasure.<sup>20</sup> See table 4.

Based on the rich visual example, there is a variety of sexual practices among the different groups identified in table 4 within Barbadian society. These examples dispel the myth of a sexually conservative Barbadian showing, on the contrary, Barbadians are very much giving, receiving, and enjoying sexual pleasure, whether permissively or not.

Despite this evidence and based on the information gathered, some Barbadians are hypocritical on issues related to human sexuality. One male interviewee from the parish of St. Michael comments,

‘Well, I think Barbados is an interesting scenario in that a lot of sexual views, views on sexuality and practices on sexuality are publicly not acceptable but are acceptable in the private spaces and are practiced in the private spaces’ (49-years-old man, 2011).

This contradiction and societal control through the Church is also confirmed by one of the women from the parish of St. James when the conversation went into the direction of discussing human sexuality publicly on the call in programs. She comments,

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<sup>19</sup> See Barbadian Church and individuals comments/reactions to all aspects of human sexuality and sexual pleasure within Barbados and the wider English Speaking Caribbean Tony, Best. “In Touch With Oneself”. *Saturday Sun*. June 14, 2008. 16-17, Tony, Best. “Sex, God and the Bible”. *Saturday Sun*. November 29, 2008. 16, *Saturday Sun*. “V’ Time”. February 22, 2003. 14, *The Barbados Advocate*. “Gays Boycott Jamaican Products”. Tuesday March 31, 2009. 18, *Daily Nation*. “Study: Teens Forced into Sex”. Tuesday April 14, 2009. 15, Janelle Riley-Thornhill. “Let’s Talk About Sex: UNICEF Officials says sex education needed in region’s schools”. *The Barbados Advocate*. Wednesday April 15, 2009. 11, Back page.

<sup>20</sup> *Saturday Sun*. “Rihanna Likes to be Spanked”. April 2, 2011.

‘...Nuff people ain’t gwine call because in the Bajan society they doh wah talk about those things. Nuff people ain’t going call in on the radio program and who going call in going be mostly Christian minded people who going ‘they wan’ burning’, and ‘them ain’t have no right doing this’ and the next and the third. Them is the ones that going call in, no body else ain’t call in and talking they business on radio and say they like it or whether they doh like it’ (38-year-old woman, 2011).

To reinforce the point a woman from the parish of St. Michael adds,

‘And the reason why is ‘cause Barbados is so small once you hear my voice over the radio you know me, and then as we walk along the road is like pointing fingers, so they don’t let nothing lay and stay dead’ (47-year-old woman, 2011).

These two last interventions serve to highlight the societal control on Barbadian human sexuality where only individuals who are Christians are allowed to speak openly about human sexuality in a condemnatory way, while others for fear of recrimination remain silent.

As mentioned previously, despite the overt recrimination by some representatives of the Church Barbadians are still engaging in sexual pleasurable practices, as attested by the woman from the parish of St James,

‘For some people the in thing now is oral sex. I for one I not into that but if that is what you feel that you are into, you know, that is up to you. ‘Cause that is a big thing fah right now you know, between all couples, married or un-married. The young people also. They are also introducing toys’. (38-year-old woman, 2011).

Added to the practice of oral sex and the use of toys is also the practice of anal sex. T-Gender girl shares,

‘Mind you, the big thing now for married couples, and in general, is anal. And is a big thing! You are not just seeing it on the internet, or seeing it on the movies, is a big thing! And before it was really taboo, and anybody who would have done and especially if it was the basic straight couple doing anal it was like wow! You were a barrier breaker. Now you’ve got so many females requesting and enjoying it and saying that they can’t have sex unless they do it, and they encouraging they spouse, they boyfriends, somebody to partake’(41-year-old T-Gender girl, 2011).

While this respondent speaks about the popularity of anal sex, there are others who are ambivalent about this practice, and do not find it pleasurable. A woman from the parish of St. James shares,

‘I am still in the air with anal sex...I doh know to do it or not. I have tried, but that shit hurts! So for me personally I am not doing it!’ (36-year-old woman, 2011).

The use of sex toys seems not to appeal all Barbadian women as a means for achieving sexual pleasure. Note the conversation for and against among three Barbadian married women. They dialogue,

‘No I don’t do anything so’.

‘Dildo can do the job if you have one’.

‘My man doh go no wear!’  
 ‘But I doh have one, I want one’. You have a live one, what you want a mock one for?’  
 ‘I am not interested in them. It just doh interest me. I prefer the real thing, because affection, I am a woman who loves affection and stuff like that, that is not really going to get me turned on. Who use these things? And then what? When they reach the orgasm what? They can’t hug them!’  
 ‘But they can use them with their partner’. I don’t want it all the time, but one wants a toy!’  
 ‘Suit yourself, but I find that it bother people that use technology have serious problems because I find the comments that I have heard with people using technology in terms of sex tapes. I read comments writing in the paper and stuff like that, wid men being derogatory with them using tapes because is like ahm, is no affection...there was one girl who say that the boyfriend would just masturbate, would just come in she face, and she didn’t like that’ (Women in conversation St. James, 2011).

This conversation raised the issue of self-pleasuring. For one of the woman in particular, it is un-fathomable sexual pleasure without another human being. It speaks indirectly to the repressive Christian dogma on masturbation.

### **Differences in Experience of Sexual Pleasure Differences between Barbadian Women and Men**

Despite those who are in favour or against some of the sexual practices within the Barbadian society, individuals continue to engage in a number of human sexual activities with the purpose of obtaining sexual pleasure in spite of repressive discourses within the society.<sup>21</sup> See table 5.

There is a remarkable difference between the males and females interviewed for this section. The men interviewed including the T-gender, could identify when their sexual urges began and shared that their first sexual intercourse was pleasurable.

On the contrary only three of the women interviewed noted being aware of their early sexual urges. As it relates to their first sexual intercourse, for most it was painful and for all it was not pleasurable.

Woman from St. Michael

‘Yeah because you thinking, like fah me although I went ahead wid it and I thinking I couldn’t really concentrate on dah because I worrying bout wah my mother would do, so fah them first few times it didn’t really sex fah me’ (60-year-old woman, 2011).

Woman from St. James,

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<sup>21</sup>See Kitzinger, Celia. (1994) “Problematizing Pleasure: Radical Feminist Deconstructions of Sexuality and Power. In *Power/Gender: Social Relations in Theory and Practice*. Eds. H. Lorraine Radtke and Henderikus J. Stam. London: SAGE Publications, 195-209, MacKinnon. A. Catherine. (2002) “Pleasure under Patriarchy.” In *Sexuality and Gender*. L. Williams, Christine and Stein, Arlene. Eds. Massachusetts and Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 33-43.

‘No because it was like a quickie...and it was painful not because the guy was ruff, he now penetrating a whole that was not penetrated before ah! Uhm... it wasn’t pleasurable nah!’ (36-year-old woman, 2011).

Woman from St. James shares,

‘First intercourse...16. I decided that that was the age for sex and I wasn’t having sex before I reach 16. On my 16<sup>th</sup> birthday I went and have sex with my boyfriend...’ ‘I doh know if to say it was pleasurable, it was just something that I say I was doing , and I did it. It was just something that happened for that time’ (38-year-old woman, 2011).

Most of the women confess of not having orgasm all the time. Woman from the parish of St. James,

‘The position will not make some women get orgasm. Sometimes you are not really in the mood either but you just doing it. It takes longer for a woman to have orgasm dah is a fact! For a woman to reach a orgasm, dah is true!. If the foreplay is not...if we just come say we doing it then he going have his climax before we even think bout it’ (38-year-old woman, 2011).

Some men were pressured into their first sexual experience and were scared of contracting a sexually transmitted infection (STI). A 43-year-old man from the parish of St. Michael spoke of his fear of contracting an STI arising from conversations he heard in his early teens from seamen.

‘I use to hear these guys talk about diseases... because some of these guys were sea men so a lot of diseases, walking bout wid you dick out and you can’t put it in, and it sore and it dripping, and all that shit. I doh wah dah, so when I got caught up there then it was pressure ‘come on man you gotta do something’ you know. I said aright and I went through the motions but my shit ain’t went near (laughter) I telling you. So when they thought I was I wasn’t. Wasn’t taking that chance’ (43-year-old man, 2011).

With this intervention two things can be observed in how patriarchal ideology makes sexual intercourse and the pursuing of pleasure a dangerous activity, and forcing and encouraging men into risky sexual behaviors as a sign of masculinity. It also evidences the resistance to hegemonic power manifested in this situation by the older ‘guys’ as they are referred to by the interviewee. This young man was determined not to contract an STI and found ways to avoid such contraction in the midst of the exercise of power over him.

The interviewee went on to comment that later at around 14 or 15 years old he had his first sexual intercourse. ‘She was older, much older. Twice, I think 30s, was much older’. Such encounter was pleasurable, he responded with sweet laughter. See table 6.

Another male respondent acknowledged that he began being aware of sexual pleasure at age 5 when he realized that when he played with his penis it would get hard and give him a ‘nice sensation’. He also commented that his first sexual intercourse was between 14-15 years of age with a female teenager a couple years younger. For him that experience was pleasurable.

T-Gender girl also commented that she began having pleasurable sexual feelings at the age of three which was confirmed by her mother based on the memories recounted. Her first sexual experience was with an older man and that it was one of pure pleasure. She comments,

‘Only when I became age 21 that I actually had my first sexual encounter where I first had sex and it was remarkable! And I was like my God! This is it, this is it! It was really pleasurable and the guy was well endowed, well endowed. The bigger the better...oh God!!!’ (T-Gender girl, 2011).

### **Seeking Human Sexual Pleasure**

In terms of seeking pleasure there is difference between Barbadian men and women. For the women in terms of stimulation, foreplay is the prelude for sexual arousal, preparing them for intercourse. The women complain about the men not being romantic therefore not securing the frequency of intercourse they were, which speaks to a willingness on the part of Barbadian women to engage in sexual intercourse.

In other words Barbadian women likes intercourse but it must be done in a particular way. See table 8 for general practices for achieving human sexual pleasure in Barbadian society in general.

One interviewee explains,

‘I thrive on romance, but the bajan man nowadays is not romantic! So they don’t get much sex. ...So we need a programme to teach the majority of our bajan men about romance, and they miss out on so much loving because ah that one thing romance’ (47-year-old woman 2011).

Bajan women, even when being affected by the alleged lack of romanticism by the part of Bajan men, shows certain level of understanding for this lacking arguing that it could be both a natural and constructed behavior. She continues,

‘Most of them when you feel they will hug you and kiss you, they just go right to sex. So a lot of them miss out. I doh know if it have to do with black men or bajan or whatever but is a man thing...the society have them thinking that in that way probably them soft where this macho thing where them have to be rough’.

‘But dah is wah they learn! It could be how they brought up at home, that too. Parents no loving, no sorta affection, so they have to do it on their own when they get out there. Is only one way they know to do it’ (47-year-old woman, 2011).

While some women see romance as the prerequisites for intercourse, for other women the size of the male organ along with erotic conversations is of importance. Woman from the parish of St. James interjects,

‘I would have to say conversation and erotic conversation, too. I... a little bit of both. You go from the intellectual and then you know, I like you play on words, dah is what arouse me. A good size dick, definitely because if I am in the middle of having sex and I realize that it is not saying nothing, and when I say saying nothing I mean it doesn’t have to be nine inches, but it doesn’t have to be four either! Because I will be turned

off immediately. I doh care how good you give oral sex I will be turned off. I need a combination of both of them...I cannot leave the man dick I got to have that!' (36-year-old woman 2011).

There are many Barbadian women who are demanding pleasurable intercourse.

'If I don't get mine I'm not going to sleep. I'm going to sit down and count every dot in the room. So whoever beside me have to make sure I get mine. You get yours, I get mine' (laughter) (47-year-old woman, 2011).

Woman from St. James,

'I come to the point where now if I do not have pleasure, if he is not pleasuring me, please get up and go. I am not sub-merge so deep in my self-esteem that I need to endure boring sex. I would rather hang myself, seriously!' (36-year-old woman, 2011). See table 8.

Based on the responses of the individuals interviewed despite hegemonic discourses of sexual repression there are members of Barbadian society including homosexuals and heterosexuals who engage in a variety of sexual practices with the only objective of giving and receiving pleasure.

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**Table**

**Table 1. Interviewees' General Information  
 Information Collected April 10-14, 2011**

DATE	SEX	AGE	PARISH	EDUCATION COMPLETED	PERSONAL STATUS	LIVING SITUATION
Sunday April 10, 2011	Male	49	St. Michael	UWI undergrad	Single but in a relationship	Visiting relationship
Sunday April 10, 2011	Female	38	St. James	Secondary	Married	Living with husband
Sunday April 10, 2011	Female	44	St. George	Currently at UWI	Married and living with husband	Living with husband
Sunday April 10, 2011	Female	47	St. Michael	Secondary	Common law wife	Living with partner
Tuesday April 12, 2011	T-Gender Girl	41	St. Michael	Secondary; 1 <sup>st</sup> year Geography at Community College	Single and dating	Living alone
Wednesday April 13, 2011	Female	60	St. Michael	Secondary	Single but in a relationship	Living alone
Thursday April 14, 2011	Female	36	St. James	Currently at UWI	Single but in a relationship	Living with grand-parents
Thursday April 14, 2011	Male	43	St. Michael	Final year undergrad at UWI	Married	Living in separate countries
Thursday April 14, 2011	Female	15	St. Michael	Currently at Secondary School	Single but in a relationship	Live with parents

**Table 2. Barbadian Terms Used to Describe Sexual Organs**

<b>Female Organs</b>	<b>Male Organs</b>
Cat	Balls
Crutch	Cock
Cunt	Doggie
Fat Cat	Penis
Nooksie	The piece
Pokey	The punisher
Pussy	The rod of Correction
Vagina	Shaft
	Stick
	Tommie
	Tool
	Wood

**Table 3 Popular Sexual Terminologies**

<b>Popular Terms to Describe Sexual Intercourse</b>	<b>Explicit Terms used while having Sexual Intercourse</b>	<b>Terms to describe Sexual Pleasure</b>
Fucking	Keep it right there!	So sweet can't get enough!
Fooping/foop the pussy	It feel big!	Sweet!
Screwing/I screw dah	This pussy sweet!	Good!
Humping	This dick sweet!	Great!
Trunking	It Hot!	Nice!
Washoff	Mash it up!	Groan
I mash it up	Mashing it up!	I ain't rentin he out!
I beat that	Break it off!	Jeze on bread!
Love making	This pussy belongs to you!	
Making love	Fuck me hard!	
Sex	Don't stop! Don't stop, keep going!	
Doing it	You are hurting me!	
I suck she/ I suck the pussy	I want this big dicky!	
A gih she real good	You need to put this big cock inside of me!	
I foop she last night	This dickie big and sweet!	
I bend dah	That feel good!	
I blind dah wid dicky	Deeper	
	Grounds	
	Break it up!	
	A gwen brek up that!	
	Dah is all you got!	

	Weh you get dah doggie from!	
	Jesus Christ!	
	Why you don't foop the pussy like it is yours!	
	You doggie sweet. Weh you does put pon it!	
	Weh you put pon this! You put sugar pon this!	
	Man foop the pussy, nah!	
	Oh God!oh God!	
	Oh Lord! Oh Lord!	
	Oh boy you gwen kill mah!	
	Cumm, cumm, cum fah me!	

**Table 4 Sexual Practices**

<b>Single People</b>	<b>Homosexuals</b>	<b>Married Couples</b>
Anal sex	Chumping	Anal Sex
Anal sex AKA Trunking	Cunnilingus	Cunnilingus
Daggerin	Fellatio	Group sex
'gang banging' <sup>22</sup>	Hidden gay practices	Having outside children
Group sex	Suck breasts	Hidden bisexuality
Have as many women as they can	Sucking men's tits	Introducing sex toys
Multiple Partners g		Men's anal penetration with dildo
Oral sex		Oral sex
Orgies		Private parties
Regular sex		S and M
S and M		Stepping out and having outside women/men
Some of them do everything		Suck breasts
Swinging		Swinging
Three-some		Trunking
Work Beaches		Wife swapping
Work Clubs		
Work Tourist Area		

<sup>22</sup> Gang bang is referring to a group of male of female having sexual intercourse with one male or female.

**Table 5. Women Sexual Awakening**

Age awareness of urges	Age of first masturbation	Age of first intercourse	Age of first sexual partner	Sex of first sexual partner
Do not remember	Do not remember	16	Three years older	male
No response	No response	18/19	One year older	male
No response	No response	29	Around the same age	male
Around age 12	No, lived with parents	16	Few years older	male
Can't give exact age was very young	17 years old	17	Late 20s early thirties	male
Age 14				

**Table 6. Men Sexual Awakening**

Age awareness of urges	Age of first masturbation	Age of first intercourse	Age of first sexual partner	Sex of first sexual partner
Probably five years old	13/14 years old	15/16	A year or two younger	female
3 years old	Never did	21	16 years older	Male
Before age ten	12/13	14/15	15 years older	Female

**Table 7. Men Having, Getting and Expecting Pleasure**

First Intercourse Pleasurable	Experimentation with same sex	Presently Active Sexually	Stimulation for arousal	always Experience Orgasm	Enjoy Sexual Intercourse	How often Orgasm is Achieved
Yes	No/ but was curious about sexual organs	Yes	Touching, memory talking about sex pornography	Yes	Yes	All the time
Really pleasurable	yes	no		yes	yes	All the time
yes	no	yes		Depends on mood	Depends on mood	Depends on partner

**Table 8. Ways of Pleasure Seeking**

<b>Other activities which gives sexual pleasure</b>	<b>Use and Views on Sexual Toys for sexual Pleasure</b>	<b>Use and Views on Technology for sexual Pleasure</b>
Being caressed	Used occasionally	Telephone sex
Biting	Not a favourite	Like to see men masturbate on skype
Kissing	Use of Dildo	Do not see the need if have husband
Phone sex	vibrators	Used them
rubbing	Never used them	Not impressed with phone sex
Sucking of breast	video	Has no problem with it
Sucking nipples		
Watching women masturbate		

**Table 9. Women Having, Getting and Expecting Pleasure**

<b>Was first Intercourse Pleasurable</b>	<b>Experimentation with same sex</b>	<b>Active Sexually</b>	<b>Stimulation for arousal</b>	<b>Experience Orgasm</b>	<b>Enjoy Sexual Intercourse</b>	<b>How often Orgasm is Achieved</b>
Was neither painful nor pleasurable	No	yes	Appearance of strength affection	Yes when in the mood	Yes	6 out of 10
Was not pleasurable/was painful	no	yes	Affectionate playing Picking, hugs and feeling romantic	yes		60 to 70%
Was not pleasurable	no	yes	Intimacy sitting down having a good conversation , kissing making me feel special, a glass of wine	yes		50/50
Was afraid and was not pleasurable	no	No				
Was a quickie at a fair and was painful	yes	yes	A good size dick A good bath sex toys showering together The mind	Most of the time	Yes with present boy friend	All the time with present boyfriend