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Lingering Colonialities as Blockades to Peace Education: School Violence in Trinidad

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Abstract

Book Summary: Bringing together the voices of scholars and practitioners on challenges and possibilities of implementing peace education in diverse global sites, this book addresses key questions for students seeking to deepen their understanding of the field. The book not only highlights ground-breaking and rich qualitative studies from around the globe, but also analyses the limits and possibilities of peace education in diverse contexts of conflict and post-conflict societies. Contributing authors address how educators and learners can make meaning of international peace education efforts, how various forms of peace and violence interact in and around schools, and how the field of peace education has evolved and grown over the past four decades.

Chapter Summary: By using data on school violence from field research in Trinidad and Tobago (TT), I argue that "in the knowledge production of 'school violence,' 'school' is subtracted as a descriptive [term], and in its place is hoisted the category of 'youth,' inscribed as the 'Other,' the predominant signifier of violence." In so doing, the predominating discourse about what constitutes school violence itself, and its drivers/'causes,' takes on a limiting and individualizing nature. As a result, the principal interventions that emanate from such a discourse are correspondingly narrow and therefore fail to reveal the structural violence in which "youth violence in school" is embedded. I posit this discursive violence as a lingering coloniality, and thus, as a blockade to the implementation of sustainable peace education in TT's schools. [*excerpt*]

Keywords
school violence, Trinidad, Tobago, peace education

Disciplines
Caribbean Languages and Societies | Education | Educational Leadership | International and Comparative Education | Latin American History | Latin American Languages and Societies | Latin American Studies | Latina/o Studies | Peace and Conflict Studies | Race, Ethnicity and Post-Colonial Studies | Social and Philosophical Foundations of Education | Teacher Education and Professional Development

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Lingering Colonialities as Blockades to Peace Education: School Violence in Trinidad

Hakim Mohandas Amani Williams

Introduction

The essence of this chapter is encapsulated quite well by the following quote:

> violence has been constructed by and through a "tunnel vision" that only reacts to certain individualistic events or isolated circumstances. Tunnel vision ... is violent in that ... it occludes the making and marking of power ... Thus, regimes of power perpetuate material and subjective violence at the everyday level. (McLaren, Leonardo, and Allen 1999: 145)

By using data on school violence from field research in Trinidad and Tobago (TT), I argue that "in the knowledge production of 'school violence,' 'school' is subtracted as a descriptive [term], and in its place is hoisted the category of 'youth,' inscribed as the 'Other,' the predominant signifier of violence" (Williams 2013: 49). In so doing, the predominating discourse about what constitutes school violence itself, and its drivers/'causes,'[1] takes on a limiting and individualizing nature. As a result, the principal interventions that emanate from such a discourse are correspondingly narrow and therefore fail to reveal the structural violence in which "youth violence in schools" is embedded. I posit this discursive violence as a lingering coloniality, and thus, as a blockade to the implementation of sustainable peace education in TT's schools. By

interrogating discursive violence, I demonstrate the need for "a critical semiotics of violence [that] ... consider[s] relations of power in both the discourses on violence and the violence of discourse" (McLaren, Leonardo, and Allen 1999: 147).

In this chapter, I will first provide demographic context on the Caribbean and TT, followed by my conceptual framework and methodology. After a brief literature review of school and youth violence, my analysis will center on three government initiatives (safety officers in schools; the TT Violence Prevention Academy; and a same-sex pilot project) that do not address the structural violence within the educational system in TT, but instead narrowly train their gaze on the mere "symptoms" of school violence. I will then conclude with a few suggestions on how to more comprehensively address school violence.

In the section on context that immediately follows, I provide many statistics regarding crime, violence and other related issues in the Caribbean. The statistical litany may strike the reader as ironic against the backdrop of my overall argument of interrogating the discursive violence around school or youth violence. I do run the risk of reinforcing pathologized narratives about the Caribbean and poor, black/brown people. However, the statistics are real and we cannot hide from them. Thus, throughout this chapter, I intend to undercut the positivistic inclination to frame statistics as the comprehensive picture, via my usage of rich, qualitative data and critical analysis.

Context

The Caribbean region has one of the highest murder rates in the world (30 per 100,000 annually) (World Bank 2007), compared to the global average of 6.2 per 100,000 (UNODC 2013). Rates of youth homicides in the Caribbean (31.6 per 100,000 in 2005) are the second highest in the world (Hoffman, Knox, and Cohen 2011). Additionally, the region has the second highest HIV/AIDS rates in the world (Jules 2010), and narco-trafficking (World Bank 2007), money laundering (Goddard 2011), and global warming/climate change have become major challenges (Barker, Dodman, and McGregor 2009).

In the Caribbean, TT is a leader on several fronts. Business-wise, it is a major manufacturer and exporter, and it has sizable oil and natural gas reserves. With a US$27 billion GDP, it is considered a non-OECD, high-income country (World Bank 2014). With a 0.766 rating on the Human Development Index (HDI), TT is ranked sixty-fourth out of 187 countries (UNDP 2014). Conversely, TT's poverty rate represents 21.8 percent of the population (Trinidad Guardian 2012), and the country ranks eighty-ninth out of 162 nations on the Global Peace Index (GPI) (IEP 2014),[2] with perceived criminality, violent crime, and access to weapons being noted as great concerns. TT's homicide

rate for 2013 was 31.2 per 100,000 (TTCrime.com n.d.), rising from a low of 7.52 in 1998. This uptick in crime and violence has been accompanied by an increase in school violence as well (Phillips 2008). Despite the outcry against crime and violence in the Caribbean and TT, there is a dearth of data and research around youth violence (Deosaran 2007; UNDP 2012).

Youth and School Violence

Youth violence is not unique to TT; in fact, it is considered a "universal problem" (Plucker 2000: 2), as is school violence (Benbenishty and Astor 2008). Violence, writ large, has become an issue for the development project (World Bank 2007) and for public health (Moser and van Bronkhorst 1999). Within and beyond these domains, there has been increasing attention paid to youth, which some view as a neoliberal ploy to subsume youth into the logics of consumerism and human capital development (Giroux 2010; Sukarieh and Tannock 2015). Youth are also hemmed in by several discourses: that of "juvenile delinquency" (Sukarieh and Tannock 2008) and that of criminality (Giroux 2000). However, my research and activist focus on TT youth emanate from my desire to "expand the conceptual framework of the discourse on violence" (Spina, 2000: xix). I have narrowed my analysis to school violence because the school as research site is a nexus of global, regional, national, and local influences. Additionally, the school is a proximal context, in terms of its centrality to child development (Baker 1998) because of all the time youth spend in that socializing space. Schools can play a role as well in reinforcing or disrupting violence (Seydlitz and Jenkins 1998).

School violence "is a complex social problem" (Baker 1998: 36), but it has been blighted by media sensationalism and restrictive conceptualizations. There are now undercurrents of managerialism and neoliberalism beneath contemporary global policyscapes (Atkinson 2004); this is accompanied/ impelled by an increasing fiduciary retreat of the state from educational provisions (Kumar and Hill 2008). Stringent accountability measures and privatization of public services—ideas borrowed from the business world— are just a few examples of this neo-managerialism/neo-liberalism in education. These processes, and the discourses that impel them, view education, rather reductively, as a linear system of easily traceable causal interactions (Radford 2008). Emergent from this are standardized and large-scale approaches to education and research[3] that are ill-equipped to tackle social inequities, because they do not comprehensively account for complexity and diversity (Lees 2007). Similarly, these restrictive discourses and processes inform a "standardised model of healthy youth development" (Sukarieh and Tannock 2008: 306).

Schools are complex systems and violence is a complex phenomenon; and because complex systems are constituted by a potentially unlimited array of variables (Radford 2008), researchers and practitioners are increasingly calling for ecological, multifaceted, interdisciplinary and comprehensive approaches to school violence (Baker 1998; Barbanel 2005; Henry 2009; Winslade and Williams 2012). Broadened conceptualizations thus define school violence as:

> any acts, relationships, or processes that use power over others, exercised by whatever means, such as structural, social, physical, emotional, or psychological, in a school or school-related setting or through the organization of schooling and that harm another person or group of people. (Henry 2009: 1253)

Harber (2004: 44) insists that the use of the word "power" widens prevalent conceptualizations of violence.[4] In this definition, it thus becomes almost preclusive to train the gaze solely on youth when analyzing and addressing school violence. Additionally, when a comprehensive, systems approach is employed with school violence, the interventions are necessarily broad, ranging from the micro to the meso to the macro. Different tiers/types of intervention are important because violence often has multiple "causes."

In this chapter, I will argue that the three interventions that TT's Government employed in schools, as well as the mostly negative peace-oriented[5] interventions at the one secondary school (Survivors Secondary School [SSS]) where I conducted my research, fail to comprehensively address school violence because they are myopic, anemically-conceptualized, and ill-implemented via exclusionary means; all characteristics that I posit as lingering colonialities. I use this term "lingering colonialities" not to mean that every structure or process from the colonial era is extant in TT's schools, but to convey that it is more so an ethos—one of rigidity, hierarchy, control, docilization, and exclusion—that lingers and shapes contemporary relationships, structures, and processes.

Conceptual Framework

This research is anchored within the fields of international development, peace education, and Caribbean studies. The conceptual framework that shaped my research, and this particular analysis, is constituted by postcolonial theory and critical peace education. I believe that postcolonial countries, as a result of their histories, have much to offer in terms of research; I concur with Amin-Khan's (2012: 18) argument that the creation/formation of the European nation-state is very different to that of the postcolonial state: "from the

colonial to the postcolonial era, Africa, Asia and Latin America have taken diametrically dissimilar trajectories of national identity, state, and societal formation compared with Europe and North America."

Postcolonial theory can facilitate historical revisitations, and help elucidate and critique discontinuities and contemporary structures and processes in former colonies, like TT. As an interrogative and generative tool, postcolonial theory can be utilized to not only expose the porosity of master discourses but also provide new or different questions/insights/directions (Jabri 2013; Tikly 1999). Critical peace education (CPE) is concerned with analyzing power dynamics and intersectionality in teasing out varied "invisibilities" (Bajaj and Brantemeier 2011); it is also attentive to localized experiences. CPE is not just focused on a cessation of direct/material violence (negative peace) but more so on the cessation of structural violence (positive peace). Postcolonial theory, combined with critical peace education to form a type of praxis, thus permits me to interrogate school violence in the context of educational inequity as postcolonial structural violence (see Williams 2013). Threaded together, these two strands form a postcolonial critical peace education research framework to analyze data from a region of the world that is generally under-studied/under-represented in the academy.

Methodology

Proceeding on the premise that school violence interventions ought to be context specific (Astor et al. 2005), I conducted qualitative research in one secondary school. Research around youth violence in schools indicates that much of it occurs in urban areas (Phillips 2008), as does violence in general; I therefore selected a coed school in the capital, Port of Spain. My study resembled what Vavrus and Bartlett (2009) call a vertical case study;[6] one in which you factor in multiple tiers[7] to your analysis, which is especially requisite when trying to apprehend complex phenomena such as school violence. I chose a school that had many students from economically-depressed communities because I was interested in how their communities impacted their lives; in a sense, it was a school on the margins of society with students from marginalized communities. Smith (2012) avers that conducting research on the "margins" sometimes gives great insight into the wider society; the margins, though ignored, are often dialectically constituted by both oppression and resistance. In terms of my own positionality, I grew up in a similarly marginalized/impoverished community in TT, therefore this research, which I view as partial solidarity with these students, is the type for which critical peace education calls.

I spent from December 2009 to June 2010 at SSS.[8] I conducted participant observations, nine focus groups/classroom discussions with eighty-four

students and semi-structured interviews with two administrators, two safety officers, one guidance counselor, four deans, twenty teachers, and four Ministry of Education (MoE) officials.[9] I returned for three weeks of observations and a follow-up in May/June 2013. I returned for another three weeks in June, 2015. This study has thus become longitudinal. SSS (in 2010) had about 850 students and the male/female ratio was about 60/40.

As for my actual analysis, grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin 1990) permitted the data to percolate upward, so to speak; beads of data coagulated into themes and those became the bedrock of my analysis.

Data

Many colonial apparatuses were bequeathed to postcolonial societies (Danns 2013), and educational systems were oftentimes part of this inheritance. TT's educational system has emerged as a bifurcated system (Williams 2012): part of the system (called traditional grammar or "prestige" schools) created during the colonial era and run by various religious denominations, and part (much larger, and called new sector schools) created in the independence era to facilitate mass education (Campbell 1997). It was in 1960 that religious denominations negotiated to maintain their control of the schools under their purview. The resultant agreement, the Concordat, is still in place and assures that top academic performers, on the national exam, from primary school are funneled into these traditional grammar/"prestige" schools.

SSS is one of these new sector schools built in the post-independence era (in the late 1970s). My research was guided by one simple question, with three subparts: how stakeholders at SSS conceptualized school violence, its influences/"causes," and its interventions. Per the focus of this paper, I am most concerned with the responses to the subpart on interventions.

Most participants (including students) reduced school violence to youth violence, and most conceptualizations (about 97 percent) centered on direct/material violence. As regards my participants' views on the influences/"causes" of school violence, I received diverse responses, but most of them were more of an individualist nature than structural; i.e. most (including students) made attributions to students' homes, parents, and communities rather than to school, societal, or more macro-structural factors (see Williams [2012; 2013] for more on this).

In terms of interventions, I divided these primarily into negative peace-oriented (i.e. those focused on the mere cessation of direct violence) and positive-peace oriented (i.e. those aimed at inculcating a culture of peace, or being more preventative, etc.; in short, those striving toward some type

of dismantling of structural violence). Of all the interventions reported that were used at SSS, about two-thirds of them were of a negative peace orientation.[10] Some of these included: corporal punishment (punches, pinches, whipping/caning), corporeal surveillance (such as uniform inspections), law enforcement, expulsion, suspension, writing lines, scolding, community service (i.e. cleaning the school grounds so as to engender embarrassment), and deprivations (time-outs, detentions). Some positive-peace-oriented interventions included: use of guidance counselor, *Adolescent Development Program, Families in Action, Arts in Action, Rapport*,[11] student council, student awards (called testimonials), student support services, and teacher-to-student counseling.

At SSS, I witnessed all of these interventions being deployed, both negative and positive-peace-oriented ones, and I saw instances where both had an impact. Nonetheless, the majority of interventions employed negative-peace approaches. I believe this is connected to an outgrowth of the narrow conceptualizations of violence itself, including the culturally ritualized traditions and histories of dealing with violence in TT. While some of the in-school interventions were positive-peace oriented, it seems that almost all of the major interventions crafted/implemented by, or via, the Ministry of Education (MoE) were simply meant to quell, rather than prevent, direct violence: (1) use of safety officers, (2) the TT Violence Prevention Academy, and (3) the same-sex pilot project. Later in the chapter, I will provide more detail on these three programs.

Before my research started, however, there was an MoE Peace Promotion Programme (PPP). Its goal was

> to create a culture of peace—in the individual, the school, the home, the community, and the society at large. It aims to build up a defense and resilience against any tendency or inducement to violence and indiscipline ... teachers are our key agents and front line "soldiers" as we "wage peace" against violence. (Ministry of Education of Trinidad and Tobago n.d.)

Despite the quasi-militaristic language regarding teachers as "soldiers waging peace," the core of this program seemed laudable in promoting positive peace. It included training in mediation, confliction resolution, parenting classes, classroom management for teachers as "alternatives for corporal punishment," peer counseling, and stress and anger management classes for students. The MoE noted on its website that "The Ministry intends to stay the course towards the ultimate creation of a Culture of Peace in the individual, the school, the family and society at large." However, the name of this program was changed because, as one MoE official told me in confidence, "peace implied war" and the MoE (and by extension the government) did not

want to convey that a "war" was taking place (interview March 9, 2010). This highlighted the politicized nature of addressing violence in TT.

During my seven months at SSS and my first three-week follow-up, I saw little evidence of this program in action (i.e. courses on mediation, conflict resolution, parenting classes, etc.), let alone the MoE "staying the course." This positive-peace-oriented program, with its emphasis on multi-sectoral collaboration, may have potentially fostered impactful changes in secondary schools in TT. Whatever the reasons for its dismantling or limited implemen-tation, the MoE did not stay the course on this intervention but, instead, pursued the three aforementioned negative peace-oriented interventions which I will detail below.

Three Examples of Governmental Negative Peace-oriented Interventions

1. Safety Officers

Safety officers, as a result of an "effort between Ministry of Education and National Security to curb violence in the school system" (interview with Mr. Joseph (safety officer) March 15, 2010), were "deployed" to many schools that had a significant problem with "youth violence." Many of these officers were former police officers; they dressed in civilian clothing and "patrolled" the school's grounds often. They broke up fights and in some cases, meted out corporal punishment.[12] A teacher, Ms. Wellers, spoke about adult-to-student violence (a type rarely critically interrogated by the adults at SSS): "I have seen those officers in charge ... the guards or safety officers ... and they use equal force on the children"[13] (interview May 7, 2010). This is an excerpt, from my field notes, that illustrated how one of the safety officers "manhandled" a student:

> It is a particularly hot day in the deans' room and I hear Mr. Hawke's voice booming rage. He is yelling at someone. He and a male student enter the deans' room. He has gripped the student by his arm quite tightly. He instructs, very loudly, for the student to sit down. He yells "do you think I am an ass?" The student seems a bit fearful but is also attempting to appear "cool" and unfazed. Mr. Hawke yells "answer meh[14]!" and throws a chair down; the student flinches so as not to be hit by the chair. Students are passing by and peering in .... One of the deans interjects and says "ok, ok ... we will take it from here." (April 2010)

At SSS, both safety officers were male, whereas all deans were female. From my observations, I believe this played a role in either sometimes pacifying

or inciting tensions between the safety officers and students. Sometimes the safety officers were able to command respect by exerting their physical comparative advantage over the students (mostly male students), and other times, this exertion fostered opposition from male students so that they would save face in front of their peers. It would seem that, for both student and safety officer, masculine performativity was part of their in-school personas/identities,[15] and this has implications for the efficacy of this particular intervention (i.e. use of safety officers in schools). It may have, in the short term, procured obedience and "submission" on the students' part, but did it really get at the subterranean energy that fueled the issues for which the students were being reprimanded?

2. TT Violence Prevention Academy (TTVPA)

There were similar themes regarding this intervention. The TTVPA was a "violence reduction program" run out of a center at Arizona State University by several criminologists,[16] at the behest of the TT MoE. Twenty-five schools across the country were selected (based on levels of school violence), one of which was SSS. By the time I had begun my research, the TTVPA had already been implemented. It ran from September 2008 (with initial meetings and school visits by the VPA team) to May 2010 when the final report was due to the MoE. Its goals and premise were to equip in-school staff with the capabilities to craft school-specific, evidence-based violence prevention plans. The four-pronged approach would entail: training staff, then creating, implementing, and evaluating a school-specific plan (ASU Center for Violence Prevention and Community Safety 2010).

As per official descriptions, the TTVPA seemingly featured all the hallmarks of effective violence prevention/reduction programs: "comprehensive," "integrated," "evidence-based," "tailored to the specific needs of each school," and "sustainability." After VPA teams visited each school, they assembled small teams (of in-school staff) to carry out the programs. There weren't any students or parents on these teams.

In the final report, the VPA identified several issues that I did observe at SSS: poor, unsafe physical conditions that hindered effective classroom instruction, and teacher absenteeism which resulted in many classes being unsupervised, during which fights among students would often ensue. These were indeed factors that detracted from an ideal learning environment and much of school violence research affirms the vitality of the school climate and supportive school structures/processes in violence prevention/reduction (Baker 1998; Benbenishty and Astor 2005; Embry and Flannery 1999; Osher et al. 2004). However, the team at SSS chose gambling as the issue it wished to address.[17] I posit that the VPA strategies seemed to have been of

a negative-peace orientation, and not focused on student empowerment and disrupting/transforming structural violence (positive peace). Granted that the VPA was not a self-described peace education intervention; I argue that its design and implementation, in being primarily negative peace-oriented, may not have done much in "exposing and upending societal inequities that may undergird manifestations of youth violence" (Williams, 2015).

Gambling was indeed a problem at SSS, as reported by my research participants, and fights did ensue as a result of students losing money or not wanting to pay, etc. But gambling proved to be a simulacrum of violence and revealed little about the subterranean energy that fed it. Ms. Seepersad, a teacher and administrator at SSS, addressed the diverse reasons that may have compelled students to gamble:

> They gamble for money, they gamble to live, they gamble for food, they gamble for taxi money, they gamble if they want a gold chain. That is their way of earning, getting money, so they started having it in school and would have fights as a result; who did not give who their money; all kind of different things. So we had a serious problem. (Interview May 19, 2010)

While some of these reasons do seem obvious, such as mere entertainment or materialist desires, some students gambled to obtain money to eat or to cover transportation costs on their return journey home. At SSS, there was a government-sponsored program that provided free lunches, but some students (both male and female) were ashamed to be seen taking any;[18] it therefore may have been the case where students may not have had lunch or money to buy lunch and may have refused to partake in the government-subsidized lunch program.

Though I argue that the VPA co-opted some terminology such as "sustainable" and "comprehensive" to gain legitimacy, a closer inspection revealed other factors that may have resulted in its short-sighted approach. To be clear, I am not assigning full blame to the architects of the VPA, for the fault lines may run closer to the locally-appropriated ways of implementation which may have undercut the successes of this program. However, by not having students and parents on the team, the issue that was selected conformed with narrow conceptualizations of violence and its putative "causes." The restricted understandings around school violence thereby limited the scope of the interventions, which is one of my central arguments. If the VPA was indeed "comprehensive," it would have insisted on being more inclusionary.[19] However, I suspect that the very epistemological roots of the VPA—criminology—viewed crime and violence in particular ways that were perhaps incongruent with the participatory ways of knowing and being for which the critical research on school violence strongly advocates.

3. Same-sex Pilot Project

A third government intervention was a same-sex pilot project. While I was wrapping up research in June 2010, an MoE representative visited a staff meeting and announced that, as of that September, SSS would slowly transition from a coed to an all-male school (starting with an all-male student cohort). Prior to this visit, teachers and students were already of the belief that male students were the source of most school violence; this decision from the MoE merely exacerbated their concerns. The MoE representative said that the decision was based primarily on three reasons: (1) that research showed that students in same-sex schools were not as distracted and thus tended to do better academically, (2) without the distractions of the "girls," the boys may have focused more on their school-work and not have gotten into as much trouble, and (3) that the top-performing schools in TT were single-sex. The MoE was thus projecting this pilot as having a potential impact on school violence.

After this announcement, teachers and students believed that direct violence would have increased at SSS. In a focus group discussion, some boys voiced their thoughts on the impending single-sex change:

Researcher: … eventually it's going to turn into all boys … What you think about all boys [being here]?
Steven: That is madness because all boys … boys are just violence. (Student Focus Group with 2bSG June 17, 2010)

One teacher/administrator, Ms. Seepersad, felt demotivated by this change. She essentially agreed with the students' forecast: "what you [are] really doing is putting all the gangs into one school … What I see is just more work for us [and] more stress" (interview May 19, 2010). As an affirmation, during my May/June 2013 follow-up (three years after the pilot's implementation), teachers informed me that violence did indeed increase. One teacher, Ms. Lockby, told me that the three-year pilot was difficult and that they (the teachers) were simply trying to "keep the peace" instead of focusing on teaching (brief informal conversation June 2013). The pilot project that began in 2010 was ended under a different government and Minister of Education. There wasn't any comprehensive evaluation conducted that involved seeking the perspectives of varied stakeholders; therefore the full impact, both strengths and limitations, of this pilot went largely unanalyzed. SSS thus resorted to a coed school again.

The grounds on which the MoE supposedly made this decision to have a same-sex pilot in twenty-five schools were quite controvertible, as the research on same-sex schools has been mostly inconclusive (Lingard, Martino and Mills 2009). The MoE's usage of the fact that the top-performing

schools in TT are mostly same-sex to fuel its argument omitted a consid-
eration that these schools possess considerable social capital because they
were created in the colonial era. The top academic students from primary
schools are funneled into these "prestige" schools (which are also allowed,
under the Concordat, to keep 20 percent of their placements for whomever
they wish to admit. It is most likely that these seats are assigned to those
of economic/ political means in TT). These "prestige" schools thus maintain
their academic dominance and the same-sex variable is but one among many
that ought to be considered when analyzing the successes of these schools.
Yet, this intervention was narrowly conceived because the analysis was not
as inclusive and comprehensive as it should have been. It did not address the
structural violence of the educational system (e.g. taking a closer look at the
disequilibrium engendered by the Concordat), but instead was short term and
ended prematurely.

Conclusion

The examples I give in this chapter demonstrate that narrow conceptualiza-
tions of school violence thus inform ultimately ineffectual interventions; and
that these interventions are shaped by lingering colonialities, some of which
are: exclusionary practices and structural dispositions; rigid, unitary epistem-
ologies; punishment as social control; and narrow hierarchies/top-down
processes.[20] The three government interventions represented ramped-up
investments in securitization, a move that has occurred in other countries as
they seek to address school violence. Lingering colonialities, by their rigidity
to change, act as blockades to radical, critical alternatives aimed at disman-
tling structural violence.

I argue that the parameters of defining school violence in TT need to be
widened. Maintaining a strict definitional focus solely on youth and mostly on
direct/material violence constitutes a form of discursive violence, because as
such, it "symbolically inscribes student subjectivities" (McLaren, Leonardo,
and Allen 2000: 68), and conceals the role of power relations (McLaren,
Leonardo, and Allen 1999). By focusing on youth and direct/material violence
in TT's schools, policy makers and school actors suppress critical and
sustained questions about "prestige" schools (and the influence of their
social and economic capital), under-resourced schools like SSS, and culturally-
sanctioned violence like corporal punishment.[21] While these are all seemingly
disparate elements, collectively they constitute a multitiered process that
functions to maintain the educational status quo in TT.

I concur with Pohlandt-McCormick's (2000) assertion that a type of
discursive/rhetorical violence—beyond physical violence—does render a kind

of psychological harm and interrupts people's abilities to make sense of their experiences. Further, discursive violence works to gut the colonial influence from postcolonial memory so that history goes unchallenged, "thus cancelling the possibility of a radical collectivity" (McLaren, Leonardo, and Allen 1999: 160). Framed as epistemic violence, these processes can mute the voices of the marginalized (Dotson 2011). Case in point: at SSS, the principal was the sole participant who mentioned/intimated about the intersection of TT's colonial history and contemporary school violence.

This sort of discursive violence can lead to "system blindness" (Oshry 1995), where people, enmeshed in their particular context, are not able to see the whole picture because power relations are concealed from the analytic gaze. Envisioning peace processes as nonlinear, complex, and interdependent (Körppen and Ropers 2011) permits a revisitation of ill-conceived, myopic interventions. While it is understood that conflict is ubiquitous (Vallacher et al. 2013) and inevitable, violence is not necessarily inevitable (Winslade and Williams 2012). Research shows that youth violence is preventable (which I will detail a bit below) (Hoffman, Knox, and Cohen 2011). Therefore, interventions that may escalate or incite violence need to be rigorously contested; structural violence can no longer be ignored. Moreover, top-down, rigid discipline can have negative effects (Benbenishty and Astor 2008); zero tolerance policies and approaches may not equip youth with capacities to resolve conflicts (Winslade and Williams 2012); and cookie-cutter or suppression-only models do not work very well (Hoffman, Knox, and Cohen 2011b).

It is vital that we recognize that both negative and positive peace approaches[22] are needed as a holistic framework (Harris 2000; IEP 2012), and, in line with my overall argument, there need to be multilevel initiatives to address school violence. These include: cognitive–behavioral skills training (individual level), tackling domestic violence, child abuse, and parental mental illness (family level), addressing inadequate housing conditions; police-youth mentoring programs (community level), limiting firearms; and addressing lack of economic and educational opportunities (national level) (Hoffman, Knox, and Cohen 2011). Additionally, policy makers and educators should distinguish outcomes from inputs and recognize that the drivers of violence and the drivers of peace may be very different (IEP 2012). Conflict resolution should be actively taught in schools and classroom management practices should center more on character development than behavior management (Baker 1998). School psychologists and social workers can play vital roles in providing necessary support for students (Astor et al. 2005; Baker 1998), and high-quality early childhood education/investments can be strong preventative measures (Astor et al. 2005; Hoffman, Knox, and Cohen 2011). I argue that across all levels in the education system, families and communities need

to be involved. In sum, we need to build "humane school communities" (Noguera 2008: 110).[23]

To reiterate, any productive analysis of school violence has to encompass the intra- and inter-personal, wider institutional practices and the particular political economy; omitting considerations of macro inequalities and structural violence narrows the interventions and reinforces the status quo (Henry 2009). In my research, I have documented many instances and processes that demonstrate lingering colonialities; chief among which is a rigidity to alternative ways of being and seeing. In so doing, structural violence remains buffered from interrogation and that becomes a major blockade to the implementation of comprehensive critical peace education interventions. This is indeed a social justice agenda. And while we acknowledge that the social justice approach has never been dominant in education (Hytten 2006), striving to mainstream these ideas/strategies toward a sustainable peace is both very much laudable and possible.

Everything in this third-world present-moment,
emits familiar and unfamiliar yellows.
Our eyes are jaundiced by our past,
but which yellow is of yesterday,
and which is of the now?

Written by h.m.a.w.

Acknowledgments

Notes

1   I put the word causes in quotes so as to subtly impugn the assertive and too oft-definitive tone around the causes of school violence. In this chapter, I will use the word influence alongside causes to indicate my hesitancy.

2   The GPI is generated by *Vision of Humanity* under the auspices of the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP). The GPI measures three main domains: level of safety/security, extent of domestic and international conflict, and degree of militarization. The methodology is laid out more

comprehensively online at: http://www.visionofhumanity.org/#/page/news/920. As regards TT, the country received 4/5 for perceived criminality, 5/5 for homicides, 4/5 for access to weapons, and 5/5 for violent crime (with 5 being the highest; closer to 1 is better).

3 Such restrictive standardization is enforced by positivist notions of what counts as evidence and research. Smith (2012: 58) states "research 'through imperial eyes' describes which assumes that Western ideas about the most fundamental things are the only ideas possible to hold, certainly the only rational ideas, and the only ideas which can make sense of the world, of reality, of social life and of human beings."

4 A similar analytic framework is symbolic violence, as postulated by Bourdieu and Passeron (1977). Waldron (2009: 611) states "rather than focus solely on youth-created violence, symbolic violence broadens our understanding of violence to include institutionally perpetuated forms of school violence." Some educational researchers call this "systemic violence" (Epp and Watkinson 1996).

5 In peace education, negative-peace approaches are those aimed at a cessation of direct/material violence, whereas positive-peace approaches go a step further and are focused on dismantling structural violence. The former is necessary but insufficient in the calculus of sustainable peace.

6 See Bajaj (2012) for a thorough example of a vertical case study in peace education.

7 The multiple tiers include: international proliferation of small arms and the drug trade, Caribbean regional and Trinidad national context of crime and violence, the MoE (Ministry of Education), SSS, classroom-level and individual stakeholders such as students, teachers, etc.

8 The school's name and the participants' names are pseudonyms. I have altered some of the school's details to conceal its identity as much as possible.

9 SSS featured Forms 1–6 (US equivalent of Grades 6–12; Form 6 = Grades 11 and 12). Student participants were from Forms 1–5, and represented about 10 percent of all students. Focus groups were students who volunteered, and class discussions were based on recommendations by administrators and deans based on a mixture of what they perceived to be either "well-behaved" or "troublesome" classes. At SSS, there were two safety officers, one guidance counselor, about eighty teachers, and four deans. Principal and Vice Principal were the primary administrators; some teacher participants were also administrators (i.e. Heads of Department). As for MoE officials, most were high-ranking involved in research, divisional supervision, or in the leadership of National Student Services/School Discipline initiatives; I selected them because of their expertise/"bird's eye" view.

10 I had asked all participants some variant of the question "what interventions are used here at SSS to address school violence?" or "how is school violence dealt with/addressed here at SSS?"

11 These four programs were implemented, with MoE support, by different NGOs. Each program worked with "problem youth" or "trouble" classes. The *Adolescent Development Program* aimed at providing students with

information about teenage pregnancy, AIDS, sexuality, etc. *Families in Action* was focused on peer mediation/ mentorship, and leadership training. *Arts in Action* used arts-based programs (i.e. dance, visual arts, music) to tackle issues like bullying. *Rapport* was about providing education to students around issues such as AIDS and safe sex practices.

12 See Williams (2013: 57) for a description of my detailed observations of a safety officer whipping/caning a student who had been fighting with another student.

13 "Equal force" here implied that the safety officers used physical force with perhaps the same intensity reserved for adult-to-adult interaction.

14 "meh" is Trinidadian dialect for "me."

15 See Williams (2014) for a much deeper discussion of the intersection of masculinity and school violence at SSS; in this article, I use neocolonial hegemonic masculinity as my analytic framework.

16 Waldron (2009) asserts that criminologists have dominated the field of school violence research.

17 I have discussed this choice of gambling as an evasionary tactic from tackling structural violence at SSS (see Williams 2015).

18 Students did not tell me this directly but I often overheard some students expressing to school staff or to each other that they were ashamed to be seen taking these lunches.

19 Toohey (2013: 1) argues that "one form of structural violence may be simply to exclude different voices from decision making or the construction of peace. Thus, people are denied their full potential by being kept out of problem definition."

20 There are several other "lingering colonialities" that I observed during my data collection. Because of space constraints, I am not able to elaborate here. However, in Williams (2012, 2013), I offer rich data and analysis about uniforms, corporal punishment, steep hierarchies, and outdated pedagogies, just to name a few.

21 Since about 1999, the MoE has banned the use of corporal punishment in schools; however, its usage continues. Harris (2000, 18) argues that "physical means of disciplining children provide bad role models of conflict resolution, lower children's self-esteem, and make it difficult for children to trust adults—all of which are counterproductive to school success."

22 See Harris (2013; edited volume) for accounts of peace education grassroots efforts across the world.

23 I am aware that most (if not all) of the measures listed here are not based specifically on the Caribbean context. More research is needed to ascertain the cross-cultural commensurability of these measures.