## Teachers' Nascent Praxes of Care:
## Potentially Decolonizing Approaches to School Violence in Trinidad

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**Abstract**: Zero tolerance, punitive and more negative peace-oriented approaches dominate school violence interventions, despite research indicating that comprehensive approaches are more sustainable. In this article, I use data from a longitudinal case study at a Trinidadian secondary school to focus on the role of teachers and their impact on school violence; I show that institutional constraints are not fully deterministic, as teachers sometimes deploy their agency to efficacious ends. In combining Noddings' postulations on care and Freire's notions of praxis as a symbiosis of reflection and action, I explicate the nascent praxes of care of six teachers at this school, as they strive for more positive peace-oriented approaches to school violence. I characterize these praxes as nascent because they are not fully interrogative of the structural violence of the entire system. However, I do argue that these nascent praxes possess decolonizing and transgressive potentiality in the face of a logic of coloniality that reinforces hierarchy, exclusion, and marginalization in the Trinidadian educational system. I conclude by contending that these nascent praxes must be scaled-up to more mature, radical praxes, including the cultivation of a systemic praxis of care; in other words, a deeper and broader postcolonial peace education.

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## Introduction

> *As you approach the front gate of the school, you see steely, spiraling coils of barbed-wire rimming the perimeter… There are a few security guards in uniform checking the students' book bags. A few students offer subtle protestations, the rare student offers indignation, and the many--being herded across the threshold--seem unphased, but the neutral faces conceal so much… Guardianship and incarcerality: a tense duel... At the heart of the compound: broken toilets, seats of broken wooden planks against metal frames, cacographical messages of vandal-art--some in code, some with poignant clarity-*

*-reclaiming many classroom walls like ivy, broken teacher ambitions, broken student dreams; shards of possibility and peril everywhere, but all incoherently afloat. Adrift in pursuit of a tether--an ethic of care--to render their world saner, more legible, and more humane…*

(Poetizations of Fieldnotes, January - July 2010)

Violence in schools, despite its localized and differentiated iterations, is an issue that countries across the world are trying to tackle (Astor, Benbenishty and Marachi 2006; Benbenishty and Astor 2008; Ohsako 1997). The research often focuses on constructs such as youth violence, delinquency and criminality (Sukarieh and Tannock 2008; Giroux 2000). However, I subsume them beneath the broader analytic rubric of 'school violence', so as to avoid the common practice of subtracting other constitutive elements of violence in schools out of the equation, such as the role of teachers, bureaucracies, colonial structural bequests, physical ecologies, intractable inequities, etc. (see Williams 2013; 2014 for elaborations of this argument). Since the purview of school violence is so wide and complex, so too are the suggested interventions. Although I concur with the school violence literature's exhortation of comprehensive approaches, as per this article, I will hone in on the powerful role of teachers and their nascent praxes of care in addressing school violence. A nascent praxis of care 'entails a [rudimentary] practice that is not just concerned with the aim of violence prevention, but transcending that aim with a strong desire to see students learn and succeed….[by using] circumventive trajectories [and strategies]…outside the normalized scope of more punitive interventions' (Williams 2012, 181).

With the risk of sounding a bit reductionist, I concur with Noddings' statement that one of the main aims of education ought to be the 'nurturing of caring, loving and lovable persons' (1992, vii) where, according to Dewey, we should be cultivating in students 'the formation of habits of social imagination' (cited in Noddings 1998, 482). By fostering caring relationships between themselves and their students, teachers--as socializing agents--(Yoon and Barton 2008) can contribute in major ways to activating these visions. Research from a comparative study of school violence supports the critical role that teachers can play:

> The teachers' role--to create a caring culture…towards their pupils as a preventive measure against violence, and to teach peaceful conflict-resolution strategies and skills, pro-social behaviour, and communication skills--is considered crucial. The teachers must also be a role model for students in developing their non-violent behaviour and attitudes: their skills in managing violence with non-punitive and constructive means are equally important. Ohsako 1997, 16

This sort of proactive, preventative and positive-peace oriented approach flies in the face of the knee-jerk inclinations to embrace interventions that are increasingly draconian, myopic, short-term, and reactive. I characterize teachers' nascent praxes of care as a form of critical peace education in rupturing lingering colonialities (Williams 2016)[1] which I perceive to be blockades to sustainable peace in Trinidad's (TT's)[2] schools and society-at-large. There is a decolonizing potentiality to these nascent praxes of care, because they represent a counterhegemonic approach to school violence that opts for 'nurture[ing] bonds of belonging' among students instead of a

colonially-cultivated and -perpetuated 'punitive regulatory framework' (Morrison and Vaandering 2012, 139).

## Context

The excerpt from a newspaper article below offers a snapshot of the current and prevailing discourse on school violence in TT:

> There are many issues plaguing schools in T&T—bullying, sexual misconduct, peer pressure, physical violence. The issue of indiscipline and violence has become a runaway horse, videos of students fighting in classrooms, on the streets and even with a police officer and MTS security guards have gone viral.
>
> Over a week ago, there were reports of two separate incidents at two schools in south Trinidad where teenaged school girls were sexually assaulted in their classes by their peers.
>
> Fights among young boys which end up in serious injury and in one case in 2013, young Donnie Reonte, a student of Fargo Secondary School, was stabbed to death on the school compound by a peer over a girl.
>
> There was even an incident at the Delhini North Secondary School involving students who threw firecrackers into a classroom while teachers were there.
>
> According to the Ministry of Education, 3,300 students were suspended in the period 2009-2010 and in 2012, 2,200 students were suspended. …
>
> And the mayhem continues in spite of the $400 to $500 million spent annually in the last four years to curb indiscipline and school violence—a total of $1.6 to $2 billion over the last four years.
>
> In fact, authorities have been grappling with the problem of indiscipline in schools for decades. In 1989 the then NAR government hosted the 'National Consultation on Violence and Indiscipline in Schools.' …
>
> The 1989 consultation resulted in the White Paper on Education …While some of the recommendations were implemented, 26 years later the issue of indiscipline and violence in schools continue. (Trinidad Guardian, February 7, 2016)

This excerpt documents that the national focus on 'youth violence' is not recent and that interventions have seemingly failed to satisfy a citizenry increasingly concerned with violence in schools. However, I strive to expand the discursive boundaries because school violence is a complex phenomenon (Baker 1998) and narrow foci on material violence (including physical, emotional, psychological, verbal and sexual) malnourish more sustainable interventions:

> 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 schools' is embedded. (Williams 2016, 141)

Indeed, it seems as if schools are 'struggl[ing] to balance accountability with compassion, all the while protecting the students from harm' (Cavanagh 2009, 78). However, I find critical definitions of school violence more apt:

> 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)

The notion of power is often explicitly omitted (Harber 2004) from analyses of 'youth violence' in schools. Other helpful frameworks include: structural violence (Galtung 1969), symbolic violence (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977) and systemic violence (Epp and Watkinson 1996). Power is an especial consideration in a context where contemporary structures and processes, within and without the TT educational system, are 'evidence of the durability of colonial identities' (Dirlik 2002, 444). Indeed, violence must be analyzed in a social, cultural and historical context (Wallace and Carter 2003).

Violence in schools reflect that which exists in the wider society (Noguera 1995). The Caribbean region, an area characterized by intense hybridities (Benitez-Rojo 1992) and 'competing regionalisms' (Puri 2010, 4), has one of the highest murder rates in the world per capita (UNDP 2012), with TT (the focus of this article) being one of the nations atop this list.[3] School violence has thus become a major source of concern for TT citizens (Phillips 2009),[4] though it should be noted however that in TT schools, most do not have serious cases of violence (Katz et al 2010). My research is necessitated by the paucity of systematic research on violence in the Caribbean (Deosaran 2007). TT has a unique amalgam of characteristics that make it ripe for a contextualized analysis of violence: 1) it is an understudied part of the world, 2) it has experienced the historical triad of colonization, slavery and indentureship, 3) it is a multi-ethnic/-racial,[5] multi-religious society, 4) is considered a high income, non-OECD country (World Bank, 2016), while having an approximate poverty rate of 20% (Trinidad Guardian, 2012), and 5) it is considered a major transshipment point for drugs. TT--an independent nation since 1962--is one of the most diverse and economically-stable countries in the Caribbean, though its social stratification, inaugurated by colonial plantation culture, economics and politics, is very much still in place (Ryan 1972).

This societal stratification in TT is reinforced by a dual education system whose genesis lies in the pre-independence era. Today's educational system--a veritable palimpsest of colonial practices--reflects certain colonial ideological obsessions (London 2002) with order, control, hierarchy, violence, marginalization and exclusion. As Harber and Sakade (2009) state 'most schools are essentially authoritarian institutions' (172) and that 'the global persistence of the dominant authoritarian model suggests that the original purpose of control and compliance is deeply embedded in schooling and is highly resistant to change as a result' (173).

There has been a hierarchy of educational provisions since non-indigenous peoples started settling in Trinidad in the 1700s. A system in which the majority of black slaves only received religious instruction--with a miniscule subset being trained for administrative roles (Bacchus 1990; London 2002)--was purposefully meant to sustain colonial values and

hierarchies (Lavia 2012). Even when emancipation whet the appetite of former slaves for expanded educational provisions (Gordon 1998), there were concerted efforts to focus on primary over secondary school education lest the lower classes aspire beyond their station in life (Bacchus 1994). The colonial schools created and run by various religious denominations sealed their hegemony into place two years before independence in TT via an agreement that extended their oversight. This batch of colonial schools would be joined by a host of new sector schools (NSSs) built to accommodate the post-independence fervor for mass education. NSSs, with their differential socio-historical capital, often lag behind their colonial counterparts in terms of educational outcomes, and unsurprisingly, the violence in TT schools has been documented mostly at many of the NSSs (Phillips 2009). This dual system (Gordon 1962), criticized for upholding educational inequity in TT today (Alleyne 1996), thus hinders high quality, human capital development (De Lisle, Seecharan and Ayodike 2009).

**Methodology**

To analyze complex phenomena, schools make for vibrant research sites, because 'nowhere else in society do the different dimensions of culture come together in such a small space' (Cavanagh 2009, 74). TT schools not only offer opportunities to study violence but its intersection with colonial histories, and neoliberal and globalized presents.

The data for this article are from a longitudinal case study, which I have been collecting intermittently since 2009, from a secondary school in Port-of-Spain (the capital of TT). The school (Survivors Secondary School: SSS, is a new sector school), built in the late 1970s, was a former junior secondary school (i.e. having only 3 Forms/Grades) but now features Forms 1-6 (Grades 6-12).[6] I spent 7 months from December 2009 to June 2010 (Phase A), and I returned for a 3-week follow-up in June 2013 (Phase B). I returned for another 3-week follow-up in June 2015 (Phase C), and am currently there for 7 months from December 2015 to July 2016 (Phase D) collecting more data and conducting a critical youth participatory action research project at SSS, and restorative circles in other communities.

During Phase A, I conducted 33 interviews with the principal, vice-principal, guidance counselor, 20 teachers, 4 deans, 2 safety officers, 4 Ministry of Education officials and 9 focus groups/class discussions with a total of 84 students. I conducted observations and participant observations the entire time and took copious field notes. Most of the direct quotes in this article are from Phase A but they have been reinforced through follow-up conversations and observations during subsequent phases. Observations thus far surpass 800 hours.

*Research Site*

SSS has a national reputation: its prowess in sports, and societal perceptions of its problems around academic underperformance and school violence. I used purposive sampling in selecting SSS. Purposive sampling involves the specifying of desired characteristics and then attempting to locate a site that is commensurate with those characteristics (Johnson and Christensen 2008). Some of these characteristics were: 1) an urban school, since statistics indicate that violence in schools occur more often in urban centers (Noguera 2008; Phillips 2009), 2) co-educational, to facilitate analyses around gender, 3) a new sector school (NSS) (i.e. one created after independence and not created during the colonial era), since documented 'youth violence in schools' seems higher at NSSs, (additionally, I wanted to conduct research at a

school where many of the students came from lower socio-economic backgrounds, [a point on which I will elaborate in the next section on Positionality]), and 4) a school that was part of the Violence Prevention Academy (TTVPA). The TTVPA selected 25 schools nationally that were categorized as 'high risk' in terms of violence. This would almost guarantee that tackling violence would be a priority at these schools, if not in reality, then definitely in rhetoric. SSS thus emerged as the case study from this purposive sampling.

When I first collected data (Phase A), SSS had about 900-1000 students, 60 percent of whom were male, and 40 percent female. As of April 2016, SSS has about 810 students, of whom 75 percent are male and 25 percent are female.

*Positionality*

As a critical peace education scholar, I believe addressing positionality to be an ethical issue. Bound up with it are notions of transparency and accountability, and the need to acknowledge power, privilege and biases. I concur with Madison (2012) that researchers are intimately embedded in the data and the politics of our engagement must be evaluated.

Guided by the decolonizing roadmap laid out by scholars such as Smith (2012), I see worth in studying one's own people while debunking the myth of value-free research. I was born into a poor/working class family, and raised in Laventille, an area known nationally in TT for poverty, drugs, crime and violence. I have lived half my life in the United States and therefore now inhabit an insider/outsider positionality which gives me familiarity with cultural mores but also a critical distance (Ghaffar-Kucher 2015, in troubling notions of representation and authenticity, discusses the need for native/insider researchers to be meticulously reflexive in their work). I purposefully choose to research issues that affect students of working class and poor backgrounds because I do not perceive research as an apolitical enterprise. By wanting to contribute to decolonizing discourses and practices that can perturb epistemological certainties that have framed the marginalized in particularly unidimensional and deterministic ways, I am compelled to pursue critical ethnographic ways of procuring data and engaging in the world.

**Conceptual Framework**

The notion of care is seen as elemental to peace, and peace education as a possible facilitator of this (Page 2008). In this respect, caring theory fits rather comfortably with peace education (Noddings 2008a), as critical educators honor the basic, human responsibility to care for each other in co-visualizing alternative imaginaries (Christie 2009). Below, I marshal literatures on caring (Noddings 1992), praxis (Freire 1990) and decolonization (Mignolo 2011) toward an analysis of some of my data, to the ends of sketching a more humane and sustainable approach to school violence.[7]

Noddings insists that we need to re-order our priorities within education by centering an ethic of care (1992): 'a climate in which caring relations can flourish should be a goal for all teachers and educational policymakers…When that climate is established and maintained, everything else goes better' (Noddings 2012a, 777). As a dialectic analog, she pits the dyadic relationship of teacher and student against that of the carer and the cared for (1992), by contending that teachers have to model care for *and* toward students so that students may be able to cultivate that capacity (Noddings 2010; 1992). In this managerialist era of increasing bureaucratization, professionalization and instrumentalization of education, talk of something as

amorphous as caring may seem whimsical and perhaps incommensurate with the contemporaneous logics of accountability and measurement. However, Noddings counteracts this potential critique: 'caring--far more than a fuzzy feeling--is a moral way of life' (2012b, 56) with 'its own rationality' (1992, 21). This ethic of care has salience for our sense of being in the world; Gilligan (2014) posits that an 'ethic of care guides us in acting carefully in the human world…underscoring the costs of not paying attention, not listening, being absent rather than present, not responding with integrity and respect' (103) by 'numbing [our]selves or steeling [our]selves against the vibrations and the resonances which characterize and connect the living world' (Gilligan 1995, 125). In sum, this ethic of care is about relationality (Noddings 2010, 2012a) that can be parlayed into a positive interdependence (Deutsch 1977).[8]

Re-emphasizing a profound relationality between teacher and student: 1) can highlight that teaching is more than a means (Noddings 2003; 1992), 2) can engender other kinds of caring, such as 'aesthetical caring' for things and ideas (Noddings 2013a, 21), and 3) demands 'a major shift in the nature of power and responsibility in school cultures' (Heid and Kelehear 2007, 413). Fostering 'rich relational ecologies' (Morrison and Vaandering 2012) in schools is vital not only because teachers can and do have significant impacts on student experiences and achievements (Yoon and Barton 2008; Wayne and Youngs 2003; Goddard 2000), but because 'relations of care and trust are ends in themselves' (Noddings 2003, 250).

Relations of care and trust in schools are operationalized via listening, dialogue, critical thinking, reflection, and seeing/making connections (among seemingly disparate entities) (Noddings 2012a, 771), elements that Freire (1990) posits as pivotal to deconstructing hierarchies that hinder more authentic teacher/student engagement. Such a deconstruction ought to re-configure the oft-lopsided power relation between omniscient teacher and student-qua-tabula rasa to teacher-student/student-teacher. That is, the teacher recognizes that she is also a student and the student becomes cognizant that she is also a teacher, each learning from the other (Freire 1990). This re-conceptualization is necessary if critical consciousness is to truly emerge and be mobilized toward the larger goal of peace education, which is a dismantling of structural violence. Both teacher and student must thus engage in a liberatory, co-constructed praxis, which is a synergy--a loop of mutual symbiosis as it were--between constant and critical reflection and action (1990).

A praxis of care is therefore one of reflection and action, undergirded by active listening, critical dialogue and an ethos that is deconstructive of structurally-violent power relations. It is within this latter quality that a decolonizing potentiality resides. Mignolo (2011) argues that coloniality is the 'darker side' of modernity; that is to say, the construct of modernity, with its attendant apparatuses, processes, and outcomes, has epistemic ties to a 'logic of coloniality' (see also Said 1993).

The process of decolonization, which strengthened in the 1960s--leading to many independent nations across the Caribbean--has not reached its apotheosis; the more intractable terrain seems to be epistemological decolonization. The logic of coloniality, threaded through brutal whippings, missionary education (Bacchus 1990; Gordon 1998), and the denigration of indigenous cosmologies and epistemologies (Wa Thiong'o 1986; Nyamnjoh 2012), was about biopolitical control and psychic penetration so as to render people 'governable' (Foucault 1991), subservient (Fanon 1984) and dependent (Memmi 1965). Hijacking knowledge-production--for therein lies power (Foucault 1980)--and hitching it to the Western episteme, the logic of coloniality thereby reinforced an ethic of hierarchization, exclusion, marginalization and dehumanization that is replicated in today's postcolonial TT. Mignolo (2011) thus calls for

decolonial thinking which is 'the relentless work of unveiling how the [colonial] matrix works' and the decolonial option which 'is the relentless project of getting us all out of the mirage of modernity and the trap of coloniality' (17). A praxis of care has the capacity to do so. What I will share in the data section is centered on how six teachers crafted their own praxes; however, in the conclusion, I argue that they must go further in metamorphosing their nascent praxes of care into a mature, radical version. This mature version is one that can and must be a decolonizing praxis of care: a deeper and broader postcolonial peace education (Shirazi 2011) that excavates a legacy of hierarchy and exclusion and sows the seeds of healing, participation, empowerment and co-envisioning of sustainable and just futures. A decolonizing praxis of care is therefore education *for* peace aimed at upending postcolonial structural violence[9] (see Reardon 1997; 1999 for discussions of education *about* peace [e.g. knowledges, content] and education *for* peace [e.g. attitudes and skills to achieve peace]).

*Postcolonial Peace Education*

Before I present the data about the teachers' nascent praxes, I will elaborate a bit on this notion of postcolonial peace education (PPE). Although I argue in the conclusion for a more substantive PPE, I do believe that both my approach to the data analysis and the teachers' praxes represent and intimate the potentialities of a PPE.

A PPE--a synergy between decolonization (i.e. Mignolo's [2011] decolonial thinking *and* action) and critical peace education (i.e. analyzing power dynamics and intersectionalities, embracing transformative agency, and generating new forms of inquiry [Bajaj and Brantmeier 2011])--is a re-contextualization of seemingly discontinuous present-day ontologies and geographies by disinterring histories and rendering critical re-processings. PPE is thus, in part, a contrapuntal reading (Said 1993) of the inequitable, anti-democratic now against a Caribbean yesteryear which is uniquely demarcated by a ternion of oppressions: colonialism, slavery and indentureship, so as to inform more critical ways forward. This is not an exhumation whose end is some sort of pre-colonial purist indigeneity, but of re-connections and re-circuitings. Not doing this vastly hobbles, if not precludes, the envisioning of sustainable and just futures, for it would leave the logic of coloniality uninterrupted.

A PPE, as a new form of inquiry and an approach to analysis, is demonstrated by my interrogation of the data in both unveiling the space-specific, lingering colonialities that shape and constrain contemporary power relationships, and highlighting the potentially transformative agencies of teachers and students who resist, re-appropriate and create anew. The latter is what a praxis of PPE can look like in schools: teachers and students, together, questioning various histories and postcolonial iterations of structural violence that diminish human dignity and divide teacher and student by reifying power disequilibria, and co-imagining and co-creating more just tomorrows. But this is why I call for a more substantive PPE in the conclusion, because I deem the teachers' praxes of care as a nascent or potential PPE.

In sum, PPE is both an analytic praxis for epistemic disassembly and/or de-linking, and a participatory praxis that teachers, students, policymakers, and communities can employ in re-tooling/re-envisioning curricula, structures, policies, and in-school practices.

**Teachers' Nascent Praxes of Care**

The data for this section were procured from my asking teacher respondents 'how do you deal with/address school violence here at SSS?' and 'if you had all the resources you needed, how would you address school violence?' I divided the data into negative peace-oriented interventions (i.e. those mostly focused on a cessation of direct/material violence) and student-centered or more positive peace-oriented interventions (i.e. those mostly focused on interrogating other kinds of violences and creating a culture of 'peace' (see Galtung 1969 for an elaboration on negative and positive peace).[10] Data from all the respondents at SSS (i.e. teachers, students, administrators, etc.) showed that about half of the interventions used to address school violence were of a punitive nature and about two thirds were of a negative peace orientation[11] (WILLIAMS 2012).

These nascent praxes of care are from six female teachers (out of a total of 20 teacher respondents, 3 of whom were male[12]). These nascent praxes of care are contrasted by data from some respondents (especially students) about the derogatory manner in which some teachers addressed them (e.g. calling students 'asses', 'stupid', etc.; see WILLIAMS 2013 for extensive data on this). In what follows, I show how these nascent praxes of care center on deep, constant reflection, all undergirded by these teachers' desires to reach through to their students. Although institutional policies and practices sometimes 'trump the power of teachers' by an insistence on using punitive responses/interventions to address school violence (Chubbuck and Zembylas 2011), this data below demonstrate some transformative teacher agency amidst larger constraints.

Ms. Camposina, a veteran teacher, always reflected on her interactions and various practices with her students. She divulged that, out of extreme rage, she had once slapped a female student when she had discovered that this student had been charging others a fee to create parental excuses with forged signatures. That slapping incident prompted her to reflect deeply about her response and she realized that it 'may not have been the best reaction' (Interview, May 5, 2010). Thereafter, she resolved to engage in a process of continuous self-reflection about the ways in which she addressed student indiscipline and violence at SSS. Continuous self-reflection is one of the cornerstones of Freirean praxis, with Ms. Camposina's dispositional shift toward her students constituting the action component. Her initial violent response to the student is part of a larger cultural belief--informed by the logic of coloniality--in the appropriateness of corporal punishment for disciplining children/youth/students. Her self-reflection led to another realization: that her students needed safe spaces and avenues in her classroom for emotional self-expression. She stated:

> I also open options for them to be able to discuss and say how they feel. Because I feel that some of the problems we have are that [we] don't allow them the opportunity to say how they feel about things. Because it's only if they say how they feel it is then we can explore…other options...or why what you think may not work. That is where I start as a form teacher. (Interview, May 5, 2010)

In this quote, Ms. Camposina expressed an analytical understanding beyond the symptoms of student indiscipline and violence; she attributed some of the 'problems' to a lack of spaces where students can safely express and process their emotional baggage. This praxis of care has the potential to help decolonize the traditional and prevailing notion in TT that 'children ought to be seen but not heard'. Her praxis established a space where students could be heard and feel authentically acknowledged.

Another teacher, Ms. Thierry, shared this belief. When her classes commenced, especially those that followed the lunch period, she carved out a few minutes during which students would have some time to discuss anything they wanted with her and with each other. It was a strategy she employed to get them to 'settle down' before diving into the school work. In addition to this strategy, she met with each student on an individual basis during each of the three terms (semesters) over the academic year. Oftentimes, the meetings were as short as ten or fifteen minutes, but they served multiple purposes: 1) the student felt special because he/she got this attention, 2) the teacher created an opportunity to know the student beyond the curriculum, and 3) space was created for dialogue; a core element of a praxis of care. TT's educational system is one marked by academic competiveness, and this prioritization may relegate the tending to the psycho-social and the emotional needs of students as second-tier tasks. But taking some instructional time to listen to students and engage in dialogue with them demonstrates a level of caring, especially at a school environment in which many students are disinterested, and with which many possess fairly weak bonds of belonging. Acknowledging each student and her dignity also has the decolonizing power to combat the colonial politics of disposability (Giroux 2009) that constructs and constrains the type of student that attends schools like SSS.[13]

Ms. Seepersad, a teacher and high-level administrator, also employed this practice with her students; she reported that she would have frequent check-ins with each of them and ensured that she connected with the students' form (i.e. main classroom) teachers so that the students would know that she was 'there for them' whenever they needed her. Developing this support system is a central aspect of a praxis of care, because teachers at SSS reported that they often would encounter students who spoke of different types of abuse that they experienced in their homes and communities. At departmental-level meetings, Ms. Seepersad said that she would share any 'best practices' with other administrators/teachers so that they could learn what was working and perhaps implement them. Teacher respondents, like Ms. Seepersad, insisted on expending the energy and time necessary to become more acquainted with the students' backgrounds, because this provided an entryway to better understand the students' 'anger problems.' Too often, analyses of violence in schools center on the symptom and the immediate, directly-observable student behavior, failing to impugn this veneer of putative youth 'deviancy' and 'delinquency' (see Williams 2016 for an extended critique of this discursive violence).

Pivotal to Ms. Nielsen's praxis of care in addressing violence and indiscipline was a 'modelling', anchored in mutual respect, of the behaviors and values she expected of her own students. In the quote below, she imbibes Noddings' moral injunction regarding the relationality of an ethic of care, and the Freirean notion of the dialectical relationship between teacher-student and student-teacher. Ms. Nielsen shared:

> I always tell my students [that] I always respect down to the smallest person. They
> will tell you that. And I am never too big to come back and say I am
> sorry…probably because of how the society has played it out, some people may
> think that they shouldn't apologize to the children but I feel [that] especially when
> you are…the authoritative figure you gonna have to say I am sorry, and I think if I
> model this behavior with my children then they would see how to behave.
> (Interview, June 1, 2010)

In TT society, colonial hierarchization abounds, as evinced by dominant conceptualizations of the teacher as sole authority and the student as necessarily-subordinate. Ms. Nielsen's approach

has the decolonizing potential to deconstruct these types of relationships by demonstrating to her students how much she respects them. In fact, she posited that, as the authority figure in the classroom, the teacher had a larger moral onus of responsibility. Her simple story below is powerfully illustrative:

> Cell phones are not allowed to be used in the classrooms; if it is seen it can be confiscated or we will tell them turn it off. One day, my cell phone rang; it was a very important message, I knew who was calling. My mom was supposed to have surgery and I was supposed to be told where she would be. The telephone rang, I look at the number and I saw. I said 'students, excuse me but I am gonna take this phone off.' I took the phone off and when I took it off, it was like uh uh! In other words, they were looking at me to see if I was gonna answer the phone. I took it off because it was just five minutes before the bell rang and when the bell rang, one boy say 'Miss, but you didn't have to take it off, you are in charge of the class'.... I said 'ok, I took it off, you know why I took it off? Because if the rules [are] good for you, it's better for me. I am the one who's [setting] the rules so what do I do? Talk on it? I must take it off too.' So it was an important message to tell them. (Interview, June 1, 2010)

In assuming a posture of humility in the classroom, Ms. Nielsen modelled her own adherence to the rules that she had set, noting that many teachers were often 'above the very laws that they created and intended for the students.' Her disposition, part of her praxis of care, deepened the teacher/student relationship so much that she confidently conveyed that in her classrooms that she did not have to deal with violence. This was noteworthy because many other teachers (interviewees and non-interviewees) felt and appeared inadequately equipped to address violence in their classrooms and at SSS. Ms. Nielsen's praxis--one based on a mutuality of respect and equality in relationships--seemed to have been a recipe for something that eluded many of her peers. Part of the logic of coloniality was about control (of bodies and minds) and this infuses modern-day, teacher/student relationships in TT. Therefore, there was a decolonizing potentiality within Ms. Nielsen's praxis because she disrupted the colonial template of hierarchical relations that inform teacher control and authoritarianism coupled with expectations of automatic student obedience and docility. However, although this colonial template is entrenched, these nascent praxes of care demonstrate that the template is neither deterministic of every scenario and outcome, nor is it a comprehensive explanatory basis. For example, concerns and fears of teachers being hurt within their classrooms or in school are very real possibilities and they ought not to be discounted, in addition to their frustrations with classes in which many endeavors toward classroom management seem to fail. These concerns, fears and frustrations can and do however collude with the colonial template to exacerbate the relational chasm between teachers and students, which reinforce the colonial template, stress out teachers further and deepen student exclusion and alienation from school.

There was an all-male class that was notorious among the staff and known as a 'trouble class.' Because they were so 'unruly' and 'difficult to manage', many teachers had written them off. Therefore, when Ms. Rochelle was assigned this class, she expressed her own concerns at the thought of having to be there. However, from the onset, she decided to employ some 'reverse psychology' and in so doing, undermined the prevailing script of teacher expectations:

> My [Form Three] class…seems to be a trouble class…[but] it is my favorite class. And I gave real trouble when they (school administration) gave me that class. Other teachers were teaching them in Form one and two and Ms. Seepersad said that I have to teach them now. Everybody knows that's a trouble class. I went into that class [with a] clear mind, [pretending that] I have never heard anything before and we hit it off from day one…They said, 'Miss, you don't know us?' I said 'I don't know.' 'Miss, you don't know this class, you know! Teachers usually have problems with this class!' I said, 'I don't know anything.' I was very serious with them. 'You all usually give trouble? No! I don't believe that!' That's how I did it. Reverse psychology! (Interview, June 24, 2010)

This class was fully cognizant of their 'reputation' among teachers and the ways in which most teachers responded to them as a result. In feigning naïveté, Ms. Rochelle decided to undercut this narrative. Social exclusion of students can be exacerbated by such narratives and scripts that pathologize them; the ensuing labels can be internalized, creating a feedback loop. Ms. Rochelle also engineered and facilitated a process and space where the students were encouraged to create their own class rules with a list of fair consequences for flouting said rules. By democratizing the educative space, the students were empowered because they had developed ownership. The combination of re-set teacher expectations of the students and their resultant empowerment and ownership effectuated a considerable shift in their academic performances. Ms. Rochelle said that she ecstatically shared her observations with the Principal and other teachers who had, hitherto, seemed confounded by the academic turnaround: 'They said this class usually gives trouble, [but] look at the marks! The papers! They are bright children and they can do work!' However, for many other teachers, the class remained behaviorally 'problematic',[14] but for Ms. Rochelle, her strategy of fostering a democratic and participatory learning space had procured her different results. This demonstrated several things: 1) the impact of teacher expectations on student achievement (see Rosenthal and Jacobson 1992 for experiments on and an extended discussion of the self-fulfilling linkage between teacher expectations and student performance), 2) the discursively-violent practice of attributing the 'causes' of school violence to individual traits is partially interrupted; Ms. Rochelle's example highlights how home and community risk factors are not fully deterministic of student in-school behaviors and achievements, because school-specific factors and student agency are quite pertinent to the entire calculus, and 3) student indiscipline and violence ought not to be met by zero-tolerance, harshly punitive, negative peace-oriented-only measures; classroom management and teacher/student relations can be retooled to reflect a more inclusive and democratic relationality. I contend that Ms. Rochelle's praxis must become a decolonizing imperative especially at schools like SSS, those that society has written off and relegated to the bottom rung; a colonial practice that preserves a fairly hierarchical status quo.

Ms. Mungal's praxis showed the most promise as a transgressive template of care. She described how when she first arrived at SSS that her attempts at classroom management consisted of constant shouting, quarrelling, complaining, frustratedly abandoning her classes midway through lessons, and frequently sending 'troublesome' students out. She admitted to being depressed and sullen over her inefficiency in dealing with the students, until she reflected and realized that a lot of the student disrespect was actually masking deeper issues. She thus chose alternative ways of engagement: 'I realize that these children needed love, needed attention, so for me what I did was just s[it] down quietly and talk to them…I needed to connect

with them rather than being teacher [versus] student' (Interview, May 13, 2010). It was Ms. Mungal's ineffectual approaches to addressing student violence and indiscipline that compelled her praxis of care; she soon recognized students' material violence, oppositionality and indiscipline as symptoms and not the roots of the issues. In expounding on caring theory and the relationship between the carer and the cared for, Cann (2012) notes that 'key to this relationship is true dialog in which the carer acts not only in the best interest of the cared for, but based on what it is the cared for has expressed as a need' (218; Noddings 2012a, 773).[15] Ms. Mungal's students were yearning for loving, caring relationships, and by embracing authentic dialogue and respectful engagement, she began to access their worlds, and in so doing transcended a very entrenched colonial and hierarchical teacher/student relationality.

      Ms. Mungal would offer to assist the girls as they combed their hair because she recognized that this was a major pastime for them. As a devout Muslim, she found that the music her students listened to was vulgar, offensive and downright anathema to her own religious values and mores. However, she soon perceived music as a bridge between their worlds; in her spare time, she sought out and became acquainted with their favorite songs to the point where she eventually surprised her students with her in-depth knowledge of and fluency with the music that the students cherished. This is a detailed account of her praxis:

| | |
|---|---|
| Ms. Mungal: | [The] girls, I would touch their hair and say 'well how do you do this style, how did you do that?' Ask them about things that they like, about hair, 'how much did you pay for that?' And then they would say 'well Miss I want to comb your hair'... [S]ometimes I have box lunch[16] with my students once there are extras. I stay back during lunchtime with them and talk to them. Sometimes I come in and say 'oh gosh, you all give me a bligh;[17]' I learn their language and I used to get on[18] ... When I was in [the] Form Four [class], they called me the gunta[19] teacher and gunta is another term for gangsta. So they used to call me that, 'Miss is a gunta now!' Because when someone opposed me I opposed them back[20] but I start to talk their talk and they say, 'Whaaat! Miss has lyrics.[21]' So I had to learn their language and I had to talk about things, even drugs, sex, violence, family life, music. I had to relate to music, I had to relate to fashion. I had to know Vybz Kartel. I had to know Mavado.[22] |
| Researcher: | It's almost like you educated yourself [about] their world? |
| Ms. Mungal: | Yes and they educated me as well. And that is how I was able to survive in this school and not only survive, [but] able to do things for them and they connect with me. Because they always tell me 'Miss, you have real lyrics!' When I tell these kids about Mavado…'Miss, what do you know about Mavado?' I say 'how [do] you mean, I am telling you, I go on YouTube. When I was growing up, I grow up with Shabba Ranks and Super Cat and Mad Cobra[23] and I still love dub and I love dancehall music. I go on YouTube and I check out the latest Beyoncé and I check out Mavado, I check out Vybz Kartel.' I even listen to the lyrics, read the lyrics. I know it is raw; it is explicit but I need to know. When they sing the songs, because I had in my second year here I was given a Form Five [class], that was a |

basketball class and they made me the Form teacher of that class…they were all over the place and I got those children to come into class even though they weren't doing any work. My Principal said 'you did a lot with those children,' because if I ask them to move a table they are moving it. And I had one particular student then that teachers complain about him…he use[d] to be very irritating and edgy and they thought that he…had tendencies to violence and I said 'no, you could not be talking about this same person because if I go in my classroom and there's no chair he is the first one who brings a chair for me.' He is the one who gets everyone to shut up. And I did that by lending him a $5 but bracin'[24] him afterwards for it and said 'don't let me embarrass you; I will meet you after half past two,[25] see you outside by de road'[26] (laughing) and I talk to them like that. I say 'I would blow you out!'[27] I said 'I will send a hit.[28] It's one phone call away. You have your gang, I have my gang.' And especially since I am a Muslim teacher and I practice my religion and I cover my head I always tell them. They would ask me 'Miss, [are] you related to Abu Bakr?'[29] I say 'yes, that is my uncle' and I said 'you would come with bullet but I would come with a bomb.' They know I don't mean it with the violence, with guns and stuff, that bombs are not worth it. That class was called the worst class in this school and they said to me 'Miss, if you don't come to us and teach, no one teaches us; no one gives us notes.' (Interview, May 13, 2010)

Ms. Mungal's evolution as a teacher presents an example of a very efficacious praxis of care. By having lunch with her students, combing their hair, and using their vernacular she won their respect and trust, which pried open a door to dialogue on issues such as sex, drugs, and violence, that are not often confronted in the regular classroom. In Ms. Mungal's view, she was being educated as much as she was tasked with educating her students; in fact, she believed that this was the only way to augment their learning: through a mutually symbiotic and reciprocal educative process. This is at the heart of Freire's (1990) injunction to deconstruct the stark power imbalances of teacher/student relationality and shift to a state of being where teachers are also students and where students are also teachers. Having a dialogue about fashion, music and family life may seem as a time-inefficient pedagogical technique, but for Ms. Mungal, it was a significant starting point for any learning in her classroom. Indeed, teachers need this sort of flexibility if they are to reach students, especially those from marginalized communities. Not only is a strict enforcement of a standard, stringently-prescriptive curriculum singularly antidemocratic (Noddings 2008b) but also a hindrance to creativity and critical thinking (Noddings 2013b), elements that are increasingly requisite for the 21st century globalized workforce (see Shor 1987 for essays showing how teachers can creatively apply Freirean ideas in their classrooms). To help her students 'read the world' (Freire 1990), Ms. Mungal had to enter *their* world and let the teaching and learning commence there. Dewey posits (cited in Noddings 1992, 19) that education ought to begin with the students' experiences and interests, then being creatively connected to subject matters (see Ladson-Billings 1994 for culturally responsive pedagogy and Emdin 2016 for reality pedagogy; learning and teaching that are grounded in an incorporation of students' life experiences, backgrounds and cultures. I argue that this is

especially important in marginalized schools because the class privilege of teachers may be alienating to many students or may be a blinder to student realities).

Other teachers commented to Ms. Mungal about the ways in which the students from the supposedly 'worst class in the school' responded differently to her. Mutual respect had apparently fostered an attitudinal and behavioral shift, and again, it reflected student agency mightily at play. Even that 'very violent' student, of whom she spoke, responded to her in ways that almost no one else could elicit. In using their language authentically, Ms. Mungal's praxis of care humanized her as a teacher, gained her their trust, bolstered stronger emotional and intellectual connections, and laid bare an insidious hidden curriculum that conveyed to these students that they were a problem and not worthy of being taught. The statement 'Miss, if you don't come teach us, no one teaches us' showcases student awareness of a politics and practice that treats them as uneducable and ungovernable.

*Decolonizing and Transgressive Potentiality*

It has been about fifteen years now that corporal punishment has been banned in TT schools. Many teachers felt defanged after this move because they believed that they were not provided with extensive training on disciplinary alternatives. Teachers and students report that students feel emboldened to actively challenge the authority of teachers. A silent, unmentioned but powerful aspect of this debate is the issue of control. Control, critiqued as a core tenet of colonial education, still reinforces authoritarian structures within contemporary schooling. Violence as a colonially-inherited ethic can be blunted, over time and sustained effort, by a postcolonially co-constructed ethic of care. Against this backdrop, teachers' nascent praxes of care that strive to upend hierarchical teacher/student relations possess a decolonizing and transgressive potentiality, because they represent power *with* (i.e. democratic and horizontal) versus power *over* (i.e. autocratic, colonial and hierarchical) (Follett 1973); they substitute the need for unquestioned teacher control over students' bodies and minds with an ethic of care. Some may argue that these two (i.e. control and care) are not mutually exclusive; for example, the biblical injunction against 'sparing the rod and spoiling the child' encapsulates this and is prevalent in the TT belief system as regards discipline. However, instead of wringing hands and waxing nostalgic for times past (when corporal punishment was allowed in schools), this is a ripe opportunity to embrace the teacher/student relationship anew. By recognizing that harsh and punitive discipline is counterproductive (Nickerson et al 2013), teachers, as transformatively agentic beings--and not mere cogs in and purveyors of an educational bureaucracy--can subvert and substantially revise the colonial script of teacher/student relationality with an ethic of care, thereby inaugurating and modeling a radical transmutation from I-it (Subject-object) to I-Thou (Subject-Subject) (Buber 1996) which has the potential to foster in students a profound care for things, ideas, academic subjects, the environment, and people perceived as others (Noddings 1992).

This shift--both epistemological and ontological--toward more positive peace-oriented approaches to school violence is necessitated by the deficiency of negative peace-oriented-only measures: 'striving for negative peace…may be useful toward remedying violent conflict, but it does [not] provide vision or motivation for the world we desire' (Jenkins 2013, 178). Colonial ways of seeing the world thereby sculpt our environments (and lived experiences) as such; the preponderance of negative peace-oriented-only measures demonstrates how analysis of school violence has been too often bogged down and constrained by criminological and pathologizing analyses. Therefore, teachers' nascent praxes of care at SSS are ultimately inadequate as a form

of postcolonial peace education (PPE). A problem posing education (Freire 1990) and critical peace education (Bajaj 2008; Bajaj and Brantmeier 2011) call for a generative and endlessly inquiry-based enterprise that challenges the structural violence of the status quo and envisions more just and sustainable futures. To create such 'critical educational spaces' (Goldstein 2005) will require nudging the dial from nascent praxes to more mature, radical praxes. At SSS, it would mean, not merely entering students' worlds to better understand their politico-historical, psycho-emotional, and socio-cultural constitutions but deeply engaging in a teacher-student co-mapped and interrogative expedition of myriad and bequeathed violence-scapes that condition their classrooms, school, communities, homes, nation, region and the world. A more mature, radical praxis of care--a broader and deeper PPE--is simultaneously a decolonizing tool and framework for a 'constant unveiling of reality' (Freire 1990; Mignolo 2011). What is thus emergent is a project toward a decolonizing conscientization: a consciousness-raising that is at once inter- and intra-personal, has no end, is generative, and always deconstructive *and* co-constructive.

## Conclusion: Scaling-up Nascency: A Systemic Praxis of Care

These nascent praxes of care may make a difference in individual classrooms and may be fostering attitudinal changes in some students (which is one of the goals of peace education) but as we saw with Ms. Rochelle's example, there may be consciously-deployed student oppositionality outside of that particular teacher's sphere of influence. Additionally, it may be perceived as a tad beguiling to have an instrumentalized and contractualized caring that is aimed mainly at getting students to 'behave', for that is merely a negative peace-oriented approach which students may come to see as more individual and institutional chicanery in maintaining social control. These praxes may also be coopted by educational bureaucrats zealously seeking quick fixes to school violence.[30] As Harber and Sakade (2009) ask, can 'education for peace…ever be truly compatible with, or comfortably coexist with, formal education as currently constructed' (184); similarly, can nascent praxes of care be compatible with or coexist within a wider system of structural violence? Indeed, addressing school violence has to be a meticulously planned and executed pursuit of sustainable peace because, as Ricigliano (2012) asserts, we need to bridge the gap between the micro-level successes (e.g. teachers' nascent praxes) and the macro level. Therefore, in scaling up these praxes, I envision a systemic praxis of care: a deeper and broader postcolonial peace education.

There are however significant hindrances to this systemic praxis. Schools (Radford 2008) and violence itself are all informed by many variables, and our difficulty in perceiving their complexities is not ameliorated by educational systems that teach disconnections and convey knowledges unmoored from their political and historical antecedents (Gatto 2005). I argue that this disembodied learning and butchered relationality (human to human, and human to environment) are outgrowths of the logic of coloniality (Mignolo 2011). As a result, we see the world as simple cause-and-effect, which informs linear and discrete solutions (Atwater and Pittman 2006).[31] What is thus needed is a knowledge about systems, and systems thinking (Buckle Henning and Chen 2012). Although there are differing interpretations of what systems thinking is (Burnell 2015), there are some general, agreed-upon characteristics such as being able to identify components of a system and its processes and the relationships among the said components, and understanding hidden dimensions of the system, etc. (Assaraf and Orion 2005, 523). Discerning the parts and how they connect is imperative because 'a vibrant sustainable

peace [rests on]…knowledge paradigms of interdependence, not independence, of connectedness to the whole, not atomization' (Brantmeier 2013, 251).

A systemic praxis of care--a more robust PPE--is a possible operationalization of Mignolo's (2011) ruminations on decolonial thinking and action, and this is why approaches to bullying and school violence need to be community-based, and systematically and comprehensively involve multiple components (Holt et al 2013; Nickerson et al 2013). In the TT context, a systemic praxis of care would seek an overhaul of the educational industry. This praxis would be all-encompassingly a pedagogy, model, tool, disposition and an end. What makes this broader and deeper PPE so potent is that it must be activated from and channeled toward every direction, but especially from below, akin to Canlas, Argenal and Bajaj's (2015) discussion about human rights education from below: that 'marginalized communities have used human rights in their liberation struggles and [this] offers a way to teach about human rights utilizing participatory and community-based methods' (39). A systemic praxis of care as a sustainable way of addressing school violence widens the parameters of what's possible whereby schools can become community centers; whereby horizontalized relationality becomes the guiding ethic for the entire educational system; whereby students, parents, teachers, administrators, the retired, Ministry of Education officials, artists, activists, business people are all involved as partners in re-conceiving education itself; whereby curricula are reformed to include critical pedagogies; whereby discipline is  re-conceptualized as restorative justice; whereby teacher training is re-tooled; whereby more social workers are needed to bridge homes and schools and provide psychological assistance for students who have experienced traumas, etc. The list goes on; but it must be one crafted by as many stakeholders as possible. This penetrative ethic--a systemic praxis of care--has the potential to create not only 'classrooms of hope' (i.e. where active listening, experiential learning, caring relationships and reflection cohere in an intentionally integrated manner [Munter, McKinley and Sarabia 2012, 60]), but schools and communities of hope. A systemic praxis of care--embodied as a broader and deeper PPE--creates and infuses 'critical educational spaces…in which students [and other stakeholders] might realize transgressive possibilities, and make them probabilities' (Goldstein 2005, 47). Beyond just addressing violence in schools, we need to 'catalyze [and mobilize a collective] moral imaginary' (Bajaj 2015, 8) toward a sustainable peace.

*Final Reflection*

In this article, I characterize teachers' praxes of care as a more humane approach to school violence and as a form of PPE. In using literature on caring, praxis, and decolonization to analyze my qualitative data, I demonstrate the decolonizing potentiality behind the nascent praxes of care of six teachers. These teachers, in using their agency to connect with their students, challenge colonialist forms of power dynamics to build alternative relationalities. Despite the bureaucratic and structural constraints of the educational system, these teachers combine reflection and action, to model a profound care for their students.

However, I argue that they are nascent because the teachers do not explicitly embark upon a journey with their students to critique the structural violence of the educational system in which school violence discourses and practices are embedded, toward a radical conscientization. Radically newer forms of inquiry are not generated and epistemic de-linkings are not envisioned and pursued. These are key components to a systemic praxis of care and a deeper and broader PPE. I am not arguing that care alone can craft just and sustainable futures, but new structures in

TT are for naught if human dignity is not honored and if modes of human relations and knowledge and socio-/politico-cultural production are not purged of the logic of coloniality.

I perceive a possible charge of epistemic hypocrisy in my writing of 'de-linking' when in fact I have employed a peace education framework, what some may consider to have Western philosophical roots and normative inclinations. However, *critical* peace education is about resisting 'the forces promoting regulation, universalization, and development of rigid normative standards' (Bajaj and Brantmeier 2011, 221); it is a praxis that is ever iterative and reflexive. Possibly suited for the TT context, a PPE is a critical interrogation of present content and form to unveil and discern lingering colonialities, and a mobilization of transformative agencies toward alternative epistemologies and ontologies. Its purview transcends a mere focus on school violence, toward tackling structural violence; in essence, a panoply of conscientizations, from the intra-personal to the systemic.

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*Can a Subaltern Care Speak?*

/To educate | *Educare* | to mold |
/To educate | *Educere* | to draw out |

A missionary reached into the womb,
yanked children, innumerable, and
a hospital, prison, asylum, and school
quartered them on an altar of enlightenment.
Fawning colonies--disemboweled of memory and identity--
Western-caned its citizen-children into a polity.

But
gaze
upon
control
and
subjugation,
as *longue durée.*

Disentomb our deep-buried umbilical cords of *Ubuntu;*
and may a subaltern care speak, nay roar,
through our molding *and* our drawing out…

*by hakim mohandas amani Williams*

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[1] I use '"lingering colonialities" not to mean that every structure or process from the colonial era are extant in TT's schools, but to convey that it is moreso an ethos--one of rigidity, hierarchy, control, docilization and exclusion--that lingers, and shapes contemporary relationships, structures and processes' (Williams 2016, 144).

[2] Although my study was done in Trinidad and not in the sister island, Tobago, in this article I reference TT, which stands for Trinidad and Tobago. The two islands constitute one nation, and the educational system across both islands share more similarities than differences.

[3] TT has a population size of 1.3 million. For 2015, there were 410 murders (TT.Crime.com 2016).

[4] Although I focus on secondary schools, a study of 10 primary schools in North Trinidad shows that there are problems in that sector of the educational system as well. For example, over 98% of the students surveyed in those schools said that they had experienced bullying (Seepersad 2014).

[5] 38% of population is of East Indian descent and 37% of African descent, with sizable numbers of those of Chinese, Lebanese and Syrian descent.

[6] SSS stands for Survivors Secondary School. The name of the school and some of its characteristics have been altered for confidentiality. Also, names of participants are pseudonyms.

[7] Keet (2014) is skeptical about 'inserting an Africana voice into an assimilative Western epistemological network' (28). Of this, I take heed and do not believe in wholesale copy-and-paste of Western models and discourses. Although I anchor my work within critical peace education, that framework itself and my own analysis therein, must be thoroughly interrogated. At the core of a decolonizing praxis is its iterativity: a feedback loop of reflection, deconstruction and action.

[8] Positive interdependence, as opposed to negative interdependence, is where the success of each party attaining its goals is intimately bound up with and dependent upon the other party attaining its goals.

[9] See Williams 2013 for further discussion of postcolonial structural violence. It is a term I use to describe how specific 'neocolonial assemblages' (Pacini-Ketchabaw et al 2014) render violences, infringements and curtailments on people's lives.

[10] I view negative peace-oriented and positive peace-oriented approaches as both necessary in the calculus of sustainable peace. See Reardon (1988) for discussion of comprehensive peace education.

[11] See Williams 2016 for examples of punitive and negative peace-oriented interventions used at SSS, as well as more positive peace-oriented ones.

[12] See Williams 2014 for analysis of the intersection of masculinity and school violence at SSS.

[13] At around the age of 11, students across TT sit a national exam that sorts them into either the colonial schools or into an array of post-independence schools; the top performing students are assigned to the former.

[14] As Goldstein (2005) notes, 'students may not resist teachers simply to resist; they may resist because teachers represent an institution that commits acts of physical and symbolic violence against them' (45).

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[15] The binary of carer and cared for could seem paternalistic on face value, but the teacher, as carer, in modelling care for the students, soon becomes the recipient of care from the students as well. Thus, the Freirean notion of teacher-student and student-teacher comes alive as carer-cared for and cared for-carer.

[16] Box lunch refers to the free, government-sponsored lunch meals.

[17] 'all yuh gimmeh a bligh.' 'Bligh' is an emic term that means to get a pass, i.e., akin to being excused when one makes an error or faux-pas.

[18] 'I used to get on'; 'get on' means argue with the students/be frustrated with them.

[19] Gunta is pronounced as goon-ta, and it is synonymous with gangsta/gangster.

[20] 'Because when someone oppose me I oppose dem back'; to 'oppose' someone is to confront them in an aggressive manner.

[21] 'Miss ha lyrics.' Lyrics here means a good come-back, or powerful rebuttal.

[22] These are the names of popular Jamaican artistes that the students avidly followed (at least in 2010).

[23] Older generation of Jamaican music artistes.

[24] 'bracin' means confronting.

[25] 'after half past two' means after school is dismissed at 2:30pm.

[26] 'by de road' means on the streets.

[27] 'blow yuh out'; blow you out means giving someone a decisive thrashing/beating.

[28] 'I go send a hit.' This is akin to language regarding assassination, but employed among local gangs in retaliation for the previous aggressions of another gang.

[29] Abu Bakr is the leader of a 'radicalized'/'fundamentalist' Muslim organization, 'The Muslimeen,' who spearheaded an attempted national coup in 1990.

[30] See Shirazi (2011) for a discussion of the State (in this case, Jordanian) practice of creating 'discursive infrastructures' to comply with prevailing international norms, in which the notion of dialogue and its 'emancipatory promise' become compulsory or performative, leaving the status quo unaltered (279; 280).

[31] Case in point, when I asked respondents about the 'causes' of violence at SSS, hardly anyone discussed macro-structural influences.