

**Caribbean Union of Teachers  
Teachers' Educational Conference 2008**

in collaboration with the

Barbados Union of Teachers  
and the  
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***Four Country Survey Report on Gender Differentials in the  
Caribbean***

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## **1. Introduction**

During the decade of the 90s through to the present time, throughout the English-speaking Caribbean there has been a growing concern about the apparent apathy that boys display towards formal education and the perceived resulting underperformance of males, particularly at the higher levels of the education system; a phenomenon commonly referred to as ‘male underachievement’ and even ‘male marginalisation’. Over the years this view has garnered wide support and has been the focus of both academic and popular discourse.

The discourse around this phenomenon has, for the most part, focused on comparing males with females and based on this comparison, the general conclusion is drawn that males are underperforming. Little attention has been given to the impact of culture and belief systems or to the range of personal, social and economic factors which, both independently and in combination, can account for not only between-sex but also within-sex differences. Further, in much of the debate, differences in broader social, economic and political opportunities for males and females beyond school and the fact that labour market participation and other social, economic and political indicators are **not** congruent with the ‘male marginalisation’, thesis are ignored.

The Brief prepared for this Conference raises some of these issues and questions whether empirical research supports the claim of male underachievement and/or marginalization. In an effort to examine these issues empirically the Centre for Gender and Development Studies has been engaged in a major research project, *Gender Differentials at the Secondary level of Caribbean Education Systems*, in an effort to determine points of advantage/disadvantage for either sex in participation and performance at the secondary level as well as to identify factors that accounted for observed patterns.

## **2. The Research Project**

The research project has been driven by four major objectives:

1. Identifying sex differentials in enrolment, curriculum subscription and performance at the secondary and tertiary levels;

2. isolating social, economic and cultural factors that account for observed differences at the secondary level;
3. testing the popular perception that one's sex is the major determinant of performance; and
4. formulating evidence-based educational policy reform options and relevant interventions to promote gender equality at all levels of Caribbean education systems.

The project has been undertaken in three distinct phases. Phase I included:

1. the preparation of an annotated bibliography of 447 regional and international and regional sources grouped around 7 themes as well as listings of websites on gender issues in education; and,
2. the establishment of a comparative database on defined quantitative indicators of student enrolment, the teaching force and curriculum participation and performance at various levels of the education system of selected Caribbean countries.

Phase II consisted of the following four specialist studies:

- Attrition and drop-out from the formal system in selected countries;
- The demographics of the school population in the 4 sample countries;
- Alternative pathways to tertiary education by students in Barbados; and
- The extent to which educational attainment is predictive of wider socio-economic outcomes for males and females in selected countries.

Phase III consisted of a major in-depth study in five Caribbean countries: St. Kitts and Nevis used as the pilot and Belize, Guyana, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago used for the final run for data collection. Themes addressed in this phase, and which will be touched on in this presentation, include:

1. Curriculum subscription in relation to five Subject groupings: Humanities, Sciences, Business Education, Technical Crafts and the Visual and Performing Arts by school type and sex.

2. Students' perceptions of Gender Justice and Gender Politics in schools
3. Demographic profile of students in sample
5. Performance in the subject groupings, by country and sex
6. Factors predictive of overall performance

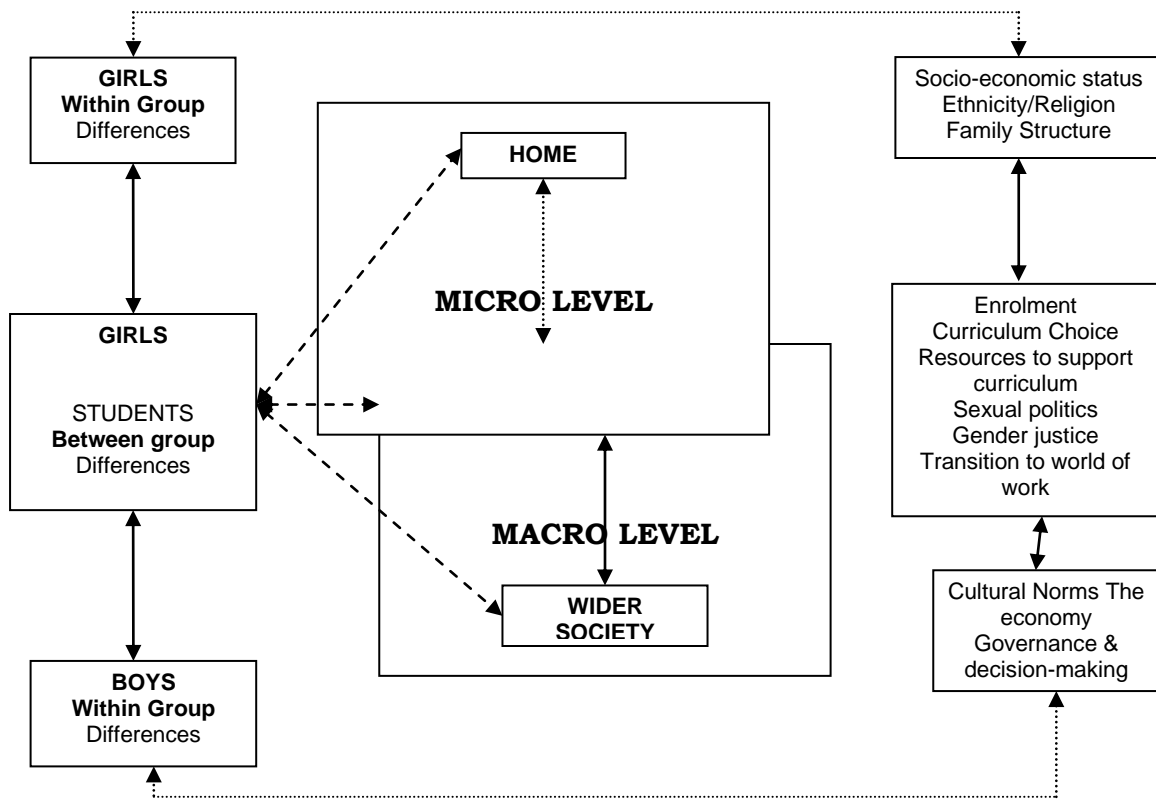
While Phase 1 of the study and some aspects of Phase 11 focused on the examination and analysis of secondary data, in Phase 111 primary data were collected to examine the specific concerns just outlined.

### 3. Conceptual Design Framework

The conceptual framework developed to guide the design of the study took into account the fact that factors impacting boys' and girls', education and schooling are linked to two major spheres of concern as illustrated in Figure 3.1.

1. The first sphere is at the **micro level**, defined as one's inter-personal proximal contexts, with the main sites of influence being the HOME where, in relation to gender identity acquisition, through a process of differential socialization individuals learn what it means to be male/female and a sexual division of labour (SDOL) is established and where the main axis of stratification is on the basis of sex. The focus in the discourse around this phenomenon is therefore on **between sex differences**
2. The second sphere is the **macro level** where through a number of structural and systemic arrangements and practices the SDOL laid down in the home translates into differential access to resources, power, status and privilege and where there is a clear interaction between two or more axes of stratification but with sex and social class assignment being primary determinants. The focus of this discourse goes beyond between sex differences to a focus on **within sex differences** based on a number of factors but with social class assignment being the main axis of differentiation.

Figure 3.1: Theoretical Conceptual Framework



A review of research on gender and education coming out of the Region shows that the focus has been primarily on the micro level and **between sex differences** and ways in which distinct differences in the socialization of boys and girls translate into different expectations and outcomes in the home, school and wider society. Much of the debate in the Region has therefore focused on a **cultural perspective** and explanations of observed sex differences in the literature primarily fit into such a perspective. On the other hand, the **political economy perspective** has been less systematically addressed in both research and debate and little attention has therefore been given to the impact of structural determinants such as social class assignment and governance arrangements on the educational process and therefore to differential outcomes not only between the sexes but also **within-sex** differences.

In designing this study there was a deliberate attempt to develop a framework which could accommodate both the cultural and the political-economy perspectives thereby

allowing for both **between and within sex comparisons**, the latter being of critical importance in understanding the nuances of a sex-linked differentials in performance commonly referred to as ‘male underachievement’ with little acknowledgement that some males are achieving while there are girls who are also under-achieving.

#### **4. Overview of Phase 111 Findings**

##### **4.1 Subject Subscription**

Traditionally, the curriculum at the secondary level and beyond has been marked by strong gender divisions which are reinforced through both explicit and implicit practices in schools. Engagement in the sex-segregated curriculum reinforces a sexual division of labour and a private/public dichotomy, with females primarily prepared for activities consistent with roles and functions in the private domain and males for those in the public domain.

In this study data were gathered from 1 586 students at the Grade 10 level in 39 schools in four countries (Guyana, Belize, T&T and Jamaica) to determine the extent to which sex-segregation of the curriculum was identifiable. Students were given a list of 39 subjects offered at this level grouped into the Humanities, the Sciences, Business subjects and Technical Craft subjects and were asked to indicate all subjects they were pursuing at the time of data collection.

Even I have fallen prey to traditional gender marking and on the slide pink and blue colour codes denote male and female dominance in terms of within sex subscription to in the various subject areas. In keeping with traditional patterns, the **Humanities** continue to be female dominated in both coeducational (6/8) and single sex schools (7/8) with female subscription to these subjects being slightly higher in all-female schools (See Table 4.1). The humanity subjects are perceived as leading to feminised service oriented occupations such as teaching and are therefore less attractive to males. This, in fact, carries over to the tertiary level where at the UWI, for example, females are clustered in the Faculty of Arts and Education and, throughout the region, teacher training is primarily a female option.

*Table 4.1: Subscription to the Humanities by Sex*

Subject (8)	Co-Educational		Single Sex	
	Male (2)	Female (6)	Male (1)	Female (7)
English Language	94.96%	97.15%	96.95%	96.59%
English Literature	35.47%	43.51%	66.46%	70.24%
French	4.26%	3.57%	6.10%	13.66%
History	23.06%	28.53%	32.32%	45.85%
Geography	30.04%	24.54%	30.49%	34.15%
Religious Knowledge	12.21%	15.12%	34.76%	37.07%
Social Studies	51.55%	51.93%	20.73%	30.73%
Spanish	30.81%	42.94%	44.51%	56.10%

In the case of **the Sciences**, data indicate a reverse of the traditional male sex-linkage with females dominating these subjects in both coeducational (5/9) and single sex girls' (6/9) schools and with the higher subscription in the latter. (See Table 4.2) This pattern corroborates two points raised in the literature: the fact that although gender boundaries in the curriculum have weakened females, more so than males, are willing to cross traditional, sex-linked boundaries; and, secondly, that the separation of females encourages participation and improves their performance in the sciences.

*Table 4.2: Subscription to the Sciences by Sex*

Subject (9)	Co-Educational		Single Sex	
	Male (4)	Female (5)	Male (3)	Female (6)
Additional Mathematics	10.47%	8.42%	11.59%	27.80%
Agricultural Science	26.94%	19.69%	35.98%	27.32%
Biology	24.03%	24.82%	35.98%	37.56%
Chemistry	24.81%	37.23%	36.59%	42.93%
Human/Social Biology	38.37%	33.52%	35.37%	24.88%
Information Technology	12.21%	15.98%	3.05%	18.05%
Integrated Science	13.57%	15.69%	1.22%	8.29%
Mathematics	90.31%	91.87%	95.12%	88.78%
Physics	40.31%	32.24%	27.44%	40.98%



In keeping with expected patterns, subscription to the four **Business** subject in coeducational schools was completely female dominated but equally split along gender lines in the single sex schools with males dominating Principles of Business and Accounts and females, Office Procedures and Typewriting; subjects associated with highly feminised clerical and secretarial occupations (See Table 4.3).

*Table 4.3: Subscription to Business Subjects by Sex*

Subject (4)	Co-Educational		Single Sex	
	Male (0)	Female (4)	Male (2)	Female (2)
Principles of Business	32.17%	47.08%	47.56%	31.22%
Principles of Accounts	26.94%	41.23%	42.68%	34.63%
Office Procedures	14.92%	22.40%	1.83%	5.37%
Typewriting	4.65%	9.27%	1.22%	3.90%

In the case of the **Technical Crafts**, in both school types, there is a clear line of demarcation between the feminised crafts: C& T and F&N; and, the masculinised areas: Construction, Electrical Technology, Woodwork, Metalwork and TD. Of note is that fact that whereas the feminised areas are available in some boys' schools, the masculinised crafts are unavailable in girls' schools. (See Table 4.4) This segregation is very entrenched and is driven both by the gender ideology of significant others (parents, teachers) and that of students themselves as well as structural arrangements in schools that reinforce the segregation of the sexes in these curriculum areas. These patterns are therefore difficult to reverse and need to be examined in relation to the far-reaching implications for outcomes beyond school for both sexes in both the private and public domains.

*Table 4.4: Subscription to the Technical Crafts by Sex*

Subject	Co-Educational		Single Sex	
	Male (5)	Female (2)	Male (5)	Female (2)
Woodwork	6.78%	1.00%	2.44%	0.00%
Metal work	9.69%	0.43%	7.93%	0.00%
Electrical Technology	7.95%	1.14%	12.80%	0.00%
Technical Drawing	27.71%	4.28%	32.32%	0.00%
Construction Tech.	3.10%	0.57%	1.83%	0.00%
Food and Nutrition	4.26%	14.41%	1.22%	12.20%
Clothing and Textiles	1.55%	3.42%	1.22%	4.39%

The patterns of subscription observed in these subject groupings lend credence to the view expressed by researchers like Figueroa<sup>1</sup> and Parry<sup>2</sup> that a male ‘macho’ culture exists in schools in which boys assert their maleness by resisting involvement in and underrating subjects regarded as feminine such as the humanities and some business and technical subjects. These trends are, in fact, cause for concern. Figueroa is of the opinion that:

*Increasingly, as women “take over” so-called male academic subjects, the options for boys will be more and more limited. Ultimately, there will be little that boys can safely do without threatening their masculinity’.*  
(Figueroa 2004: 159)<sup>3</sup>.

## 4.2 Gender Politics in Schools

In this research project we were not only concerned with in quantitative measures or measures of formal equality between the sexes but also in ‘the quality of experience of education in terms of equal treatment during the educational process, that is, with issues of substantive equality (Subramanian,2003)<sup>4</sup>.

One dimension of this study was therefore designed to ascertain the extent to which male and female students perceived that they were equally treated. This was achieved by carrying out content analysis of essays written by 1 011 of the 1 596 students drawn from the thirty-nine schools in these four countries. The topic of the essay was “*In my school all students are treated in the same way and given the same opportunities.*”<sup>5</sup> Essays were transcribed and coded using the ATLAS.ti Scientific Software package and in the analysis of the data two major codes were developed:

- Fair treatment, Unfair treatment

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<sup>1</sup> Figueroa, M. 2004. Male Privileging and Male “Academic Underperformance” in Jamaica. In (ed.) Reddock, R. *Interrogating Caribbean Masculinities: Theoretical and Empirical Analyses*. Ian Randle Publishers.

<sup>2</sup> Parry, O. Sex and Gender Constructions in the Jamaican Classroom. *Social and Economic Studies*, Vol. 45, no. 4 (1996):77-93.

<sup>3</sup> Figueroa, M. 2004. *op. cit.*

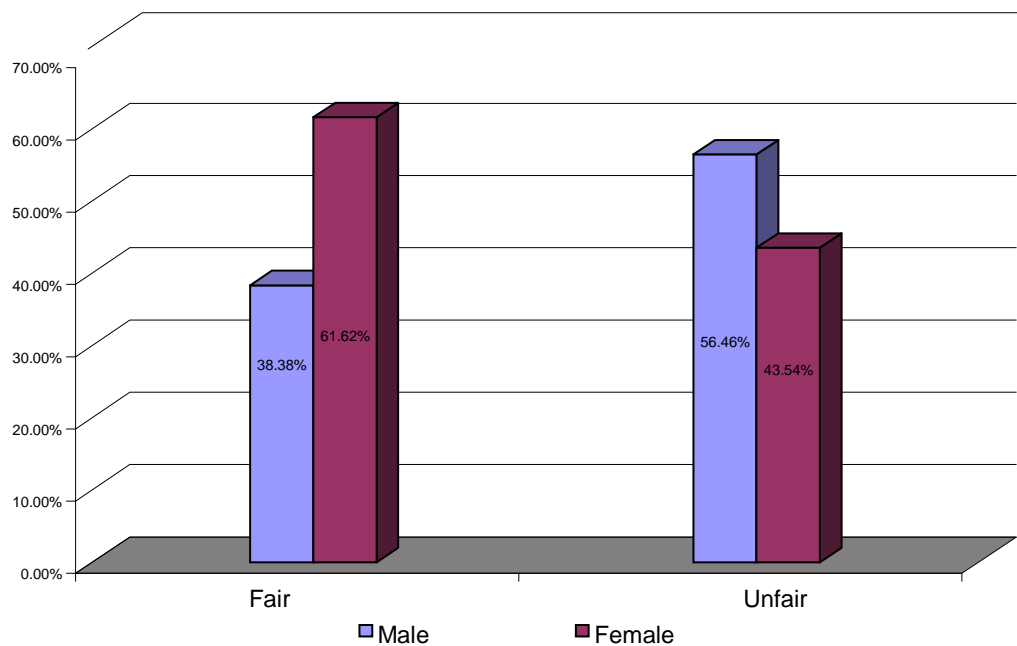
<sup>4</sup> Subramanian, R. 2003. Gender Equality In Education: Definitions and Measurements. Background paper for UNESCO GMR 2003-043.

<sup>5</sup> Charles, Suzanne. 2007. We want Justice! Students’ Perspectives of Gender Justice in Caribbean Schools and Classrooms. In: (ed.) Bailey, B. Gender and Education. Special Issue of *Caribbean Journal of Education*. Vol.29(1).

Of the 568 comments coded for students in the four countries under investigation 274 (48.24%) were coded as perceptions of fair treatment compared with 294 (51.76%) which were coded as perceptions of unfair treatment. This suggests that generally students felt more unfairly treated than they did fairly treated within the school environment.

Within-sex comparisons of the 568 comments revealed that of all comments made by male students, 61.5% were reflective of perceptions of unfair treatment while only 38.5% reflected fair treatment. On the other hand, 56.6% of all comments made by girls were indicative of perceptions of being fairly treated while 43.4% indicated perceptions of unfair treatment. Boys, therefore, perceive that they are more unfairly treated in school than are girls (See Figure 4.1).

**Figure 4.1: Perceptions of Unfair/Fair Treatment by Sex**



Further analysis of the essays revealed that the basis on which students felt that they were discriminated against based on their:

- **Socio-economic status:** “Being a student living in ‘low class’ area or your parents are something within the ministry or a transferred student your chance of getting treated equal is like a 10-1 chance.”
- **Race and ethnicity:** “Teachers tend to dislike students just because he or she is a different ethnic group...”
- **Academic ability:** “Bright students are given more opportunities than the less bright ones, boys are treated like outcast ...and girls get more respect from teachers than boys.”

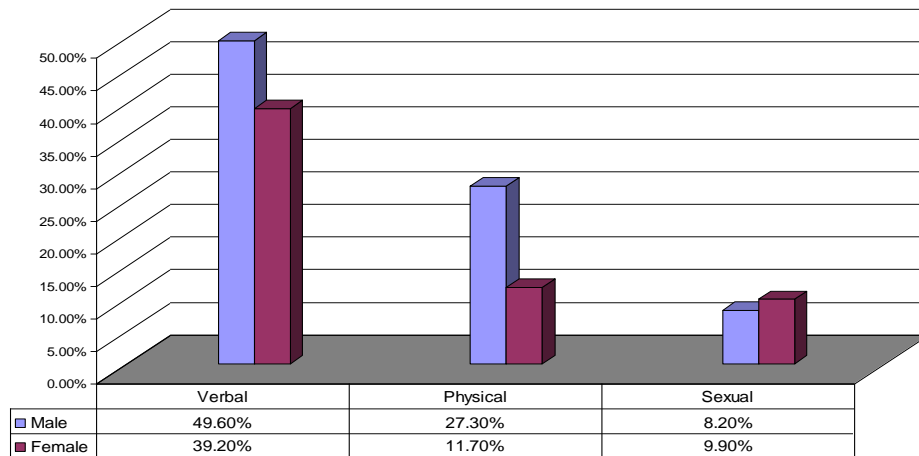
They also felt unfairly treated based on:

- **Teacher favouritism and family connections:** “Teachers tend to have favourites, these are students who appreciate more than the other students. Often the favourites are the children of parents who contribute money even if their children [students] do not perform exceedingly well.”
- **Participation in sporting events or school activities:** “Some students have more advantage than other e.g., footballers. In school the footballers are given more advantage than other students. They get away with many things which they should not.”
- **Teacher preference for female students**

Further evidence of school being a space where students are treated harshly was provided by responses to items which solicited views about the existence of verbal, physical and sexual abuse in the schools and the extent to which students had been victims of such abuse at the hand of peers and/or teachers.

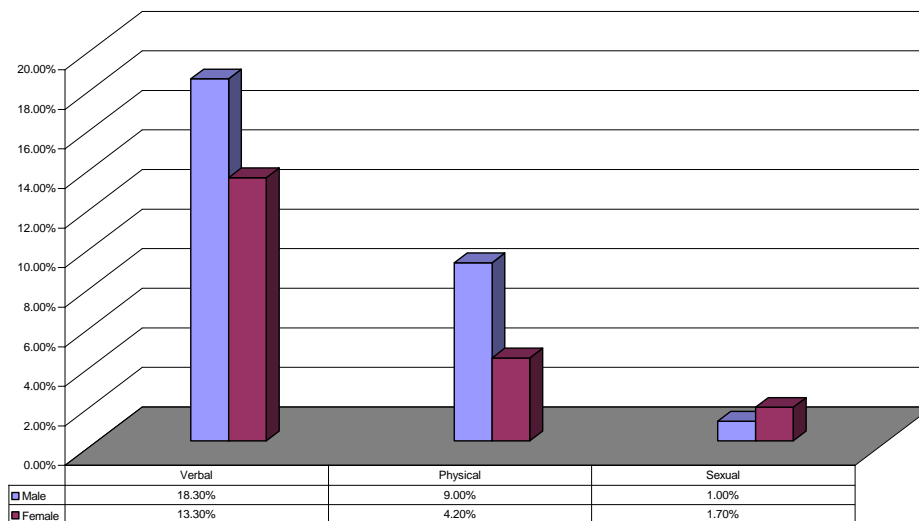
In terms of being victims of abuse inflicted by their peers, both males and females had experienced all these forms of abuse and for both the rank order was verbal, followed by physical and sexual abuse to a lesser extent; but with more males than females experiencing verbal and physical abuse with the converse being the case for sexual abuse (See Figure 4.2).

**Figure 4.2: Experience of Abuse from Peers by Sex**



A smaller proportion of males and females indicated that they had been abused by teachers with the same pattern emerging as with peer abuse (See Figure 4.3).

**Figure 4.3: Experience of Abuse from Teachers by Sex**



These data confirm findings from other studies that indicate that boys are more harshly treated in schools than are girls based very much on the essentialist view that boys are ‘naturally bad and girls are naturally good’ ....so that ‘from the start boys and girls are treated differently in this self-fulfilling conception’; and may point to one reason why boys are disaffected by schooling and apathetic to learning.

### 4.3 Overall Mean Performance on School-Based Assessments

Performance in the various subject areas was determined from grades submitted by the schools for student assessments done at the end of the school year prior to the actual time of data collection. Mean performance was calculated for subject groupings and individual subjects. Performance in each of the subject groups was generally poor. Average scores in each of the four categories (Humanities, Sciences, Business and Arts and Technical Crafts) were under 60%.

When mean performance in each of the subject was disaggregated on the basis of sex the following patterns were observed:

Expected sex-linked associations usually indicate better performance by females in the humanities. Of note is the fact that boys in single sex schools perform better in the humanities than those in co-educational schools (See Table 4.5).

**Table 4.5: Mean Performance in the Humanities by School Type and Sex**

Subject	Co-Educational Sample		Single Sex Sample	
	Male (5)	Female (5)	Male (6)	Female (1)
Caribbean History	69.5	65.3		
Caribbean Studies	48.3	64.0		61.00
Communication Studies	63.0	74.0		
English language	58.3	58.3	65.30	62.06
English literature	57.7	57.7	70.75	58.56
French	43.4	52.4		46.29
Geography	56.2	52.7	67.47	52.25
History	56.0	55.0	68.61	55.24
Religious Education	64.8	64.3	76.33	58.43
Social Studies	59.5	60.9	65.88	68.66
Sociology	68.7	53.5		
Spanish	58.9	59.1	68.58	60.74

In the sciences, in keeping with traditional patterns, in both school types, boys displayed better performance across a larger number of subjects than did girls suggesting that the sciences continue to be predominately a male domain (See Table 4.5).

**Table 4.5: Mean Performance in the Humanities by School Type and Sex**

Subject	Co-Educational Sample		Single Sex Sample	
	Male (6)	Female (3)	Male (5)	Female (3)
Additional Mathematics	47.7	41.7	23.23	46.87
Agricultural Sciences	65.0	64.5		57.88
Applied Mathematics	64.0	65.0		
Biology	56.4	51.8	58.74	50.12
Chemistry	54.7	50.0	60.64	47.70
Human/Social Biology	31.0	35.0	31.00	
Information Technology	63.4	60.7	73.23	56.73
Integrated Science	51.8	58.6	64.12	63.41
Mathematics	54.8	51.5	59.84	59.74
Physics	52.8	52.4	50.57	61.54

Again, as expected, performance in Business subjects was female dominated in coeducational schools and equally distributed in single-sex schools along gender lines (See Table 4.6).

**Table 4.6: Mean Performance in Business Subjects by School Type and Sex**

Subject	Co-Educational Sample		Single Sex Sample	
	Male (1)	Female (5)	Male (2)	Female (2)
Business Education	69.9	68.5	75.34	63.96
Financial Accounting	30.0	50.4	83.25	74.21
Office Procedures	58.2	60.6		70.78
Principles of Accounts	55.9	56.4	46.48	52.53
Principles of Business	58.1	60.3	63.95	66.00
Typewriting	55.2	59.5		

It is interesting to note, although few in number, boys in coeducational schools perform as well as girls on Clothing and Textile and conversely the few girls who subscribe to Woodwork do as well as the boys.

**Table 4.7: Mean Performance in the Technical Crafts by Sex**

Subject	Co-Educational Sample		Single Sex Sample	
	Male (6)	Female (0)	Male (1)	Female (0)
Clothing and Textile	38.0	37.8		48.4
Food and Nutrition	62.6	60.6		63.7
Metalwork	52.0		83.50	
Technical Drawing	55.8	46.8	44.78	
Woodwork	49.2	49.0		
Construction Technology	81.5	68.5		
Electronics Technology	56.0	54.3	63.53	53.5

I think we can conclude that, for the most part, the overall patterns of curriculum subscription, although not as marked as previously, still reflect expected sex-linkages while in the case of performance, boys who remain in school are not lagging as far behind their female counterparts as is often claimed. A similar pattern, in fact, was evident in the analysis of the 2000/01 CXC Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate examinations included in the Phase 1 database and which is a standardised assessment.

### **5. The Sex-Role Socialization Theory**

Several explanations have been posited to account for these patterns of male/female subscription and performance. Where sex-linked patterns are evident in subject choice this has frequently been linked to the **cultural** or **sex-role socialization paradigm** to which reference was made in the Conference Brief and which is linked to the micro-level of the conceptual framework presented earlier. The work of various Caribbean scholars focus on this explanatory framework.



Brown's and Chevannes' 1998<sup>6</sup> study of how males/females are socialised in the Caribbean showed that gender distinctions and assumptions are central to most child-rearing practices and that these differences are evident in terms of domestic chores, leisure activities and social skills and values.

Figuroa (2004)<sup>7</sup> makes a link between male academic underperformance and these gendered socialisation practices which, in his opinion, are rooted in male gender privileging. He argues that boys' gender socialisation in the home gives them less opportunity to gain the basic skills they need for schooling. They then enter a school system in which teachers share the same gendered values...so that from the very beginning of the formal education system boys face a gender mismatch which is likely to have far reaching consequences.

These scholars make a link between gender socialization and the construction of a male gender identity that places little value on education and is therefore associated with low academic achievement. While this theory may account for the fallout of some boys between the primary and secondary levels of the education system it does not adequately account for the experience of **all** boys because, as the data have shown, those who remain in school perform better than females in some areas and, in others, do not lag far behind.

In order, to fully understand the phenomenon of male underachievement often branded about as if it applies to all boys, we have to move away from a univariate analysis based on between sex differences to a more **robust multivariate research framework**, which incorporates the range of theorised variables which can provide a more nuanced analysis. Such an approach allows one to test the entrenched notion that difference in performance is primarily associated with one's sex, hence the popular thesis of male under-performance.

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<sup>6</sup> Brown, Janet and Barry Chevannes. 1998. *Why Man Stay So" An Examination of Gender Socialization in the Caribbean*. Mona, UWI

<sup>7</sup> Figuroa, M. 2004. Male Privileging and Male "Academic Underperformance" in Jamaica. In (ed.) Reddock, R. *Interrogating Caribbean Masculinities: Theoretical and Empirical Analyses*. Ian Randle Publishers.

Multiple-way ANOVA was used to examine the relationships between overall student performance (all subjects) based on standardized 'Z' scores and selected student demographic factors. This statistical model enables inferences to be made, through the analysis of existing variances in the means of all variables under consideration.

Demographic variables included in the analysis were *Sex, Ethnicity, Religion, Type of School, Type of School last attended and Parent's highest level of education*. Similar to measurements used in T-test, a significance value of 0.05 was used to determine statistically significant relationships. Of the six factors examined, only three were consistently significant to overall performance: School Type. School last attended and Ethnicity. The sex of the student was **NOT** statistically significant to performance

To determine the strength and direction of relationship between performance and the significant demographic factors, Parameter Estimates were calculated and the following was observed:

#### **School Type**

- Students from single sex schools perform better than those attending co-educational schools and this was the case for both males and females.

#### **School Last Attended**

- Students who last attended private primary or preparatory schools significantly outperformed students who last attended other types of schools

#### **Ethnicity**

- Students who described themselves as "Indigenous" & "Other" [Chinese, Caucasian, Mixed] performed better than Afro-Caribbean and Indo-Caribbean students; and, although the difference in performance between the Afro-Caribbean and Indo-Caribbean groups was not significant, the Indo-Caribbean group showed slightly better performance than the Afro-Caribbean group.

When a similar analysis was undertaken using only two subjects: English Language and Mathematics with the addition of school-related variables: socio-economic status of

school location, geographic location of school (urban/rural), type of school administration (church/state), orientation of the curriculum (academic/technical), the following trend was observed:

1. Performance in single-sex schools was better than in coeducational schools
2. Students of ethnicities other than Afro-Caribbean exhibited better performance
3. Students in schools in high/middle SES locations performed better than those from lower SES locations
4. Better performance is observed in church run than state run schools
5. Students in schools in urban areas perform better than those in rural areas.
6. Students from schools with a traditional academic curriculum do better than those in technical schools.
7. Students who attended preparatory schools prior to going to a secondary school do better than those who attended government primary schools.

All of these factors either directly or indirectly relate to the socio-economic-status of students. It is well known that Caribbean education systems continue to be stratified with the main axis of differentiation being the socio-economic means of students or household income level which brings us to a discussion a political-economy perspective..

## **6. The Political Economy Perspective**

So far the discussion has centered on differences between males and females in terms of subscription to the curriculum, the gender politics of schools and performance and therefore on between sex differences within a cultural framework that speaks to differences in the socialisation of males/females in the home and on the streets that, for males, runs counter to schooling and academic achievement. This discourse for the most part, however, makes reference to males with little or no distinction between those who are in school and performing as well as, or, better than females in critical areas of the curriculum, and, those who are under-achieving.

For this reason, I make a distinction between under-participation and under-achievement. The question then is: Which males are under-participating and hence under-performing in

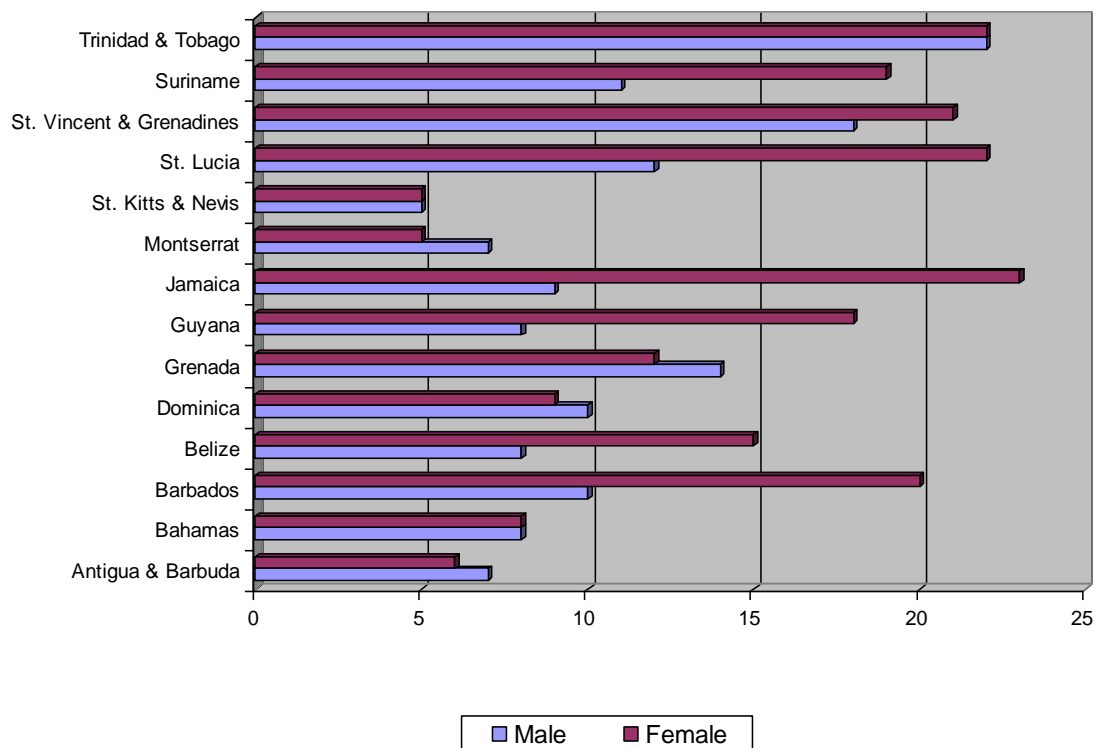
the educational process and why? This question, I believe, leads to a focus on **within group differences** and an interrogation of macro-level structures and processes which have differential impacts on individuals based on ascription. In this regard, the structure of opportunities in our Caribbean economies and social **class assignment** are of paramount importance, affecting both males and females but, some would argue, with more obvious and disastrous effects on males.

I turn now to briefly identify some of the ways in which the structure of opportunity in our Caribbean economies sends a clear message to males and particularly those from lower SES groups that certification is unnecessary for income generation and therefore acts as a disincentive for boys to remain in school.

### **Lower levels of certification, higher levels of employment (Transition from School to Work)**

Data for 2000 indicate that unemployment rates for women age 15 and over exceeded that for men in all 9 Caribbean for which data were available; this in spite of the fact that the statistics also show that in these formal labour markets females are the better prepared source of human capital (See Figure 6.1).

Figure 6.1: Unemployment Rate, 15+ Population in the English-Speaking Caribbean



This trend is confirmed by Gayle in his study of three working class communities in Jamaica. He notes that there is a demand for low-skilled male labour above that of low-skilled female labour. He contends that this pre-harvesting of males into the paid labour force, often to augment the family income, acts as a disincentive for boys to remain in school. On the other hand, girls recognizing the way in which the economic system works against them, remain in school in an effort to be equally competitive with males who enter the labour market at an earlier age with less certification. Girls are also retained in school as a custodian measure intended to delay early pregnancy.

### The Wage Gap

A further disincentive for males to remain in school is the wage structure. Census data from Jamaica indicate that at all levels of education, except where the response was ‘none’ males, on average, earn more than females annually (See Figure 6.2). The female advantage at the level of ‘no education’ may be due to reluctance on the part of men in this category to reveal real income which could be realized from activities which would be risky to divulge.

*Table 6.2: Mean Yearly Earnings of Employed Males and Females by Highest Level of Education (Jamaica)*

Highest Level of Education	Mean Yearly Earnings (\$)	Mean Yearly Earnings (\$)
	Male	Female
None	107,583.8	133,181.9
Pre-Primary	203,702.1	133,971.2
Primary	184,211.0	152,845.8
Secondary	254,860.9	212,629.6
University	1,181,826	876,580.2
Other Tertiary	579,656.9	423,464.3
Special School	340,001.9	229,583.3
Other	263,445.2	254,219.7

Source: Ricketts, 2006 - Calculated from 2001 STATIN Census data

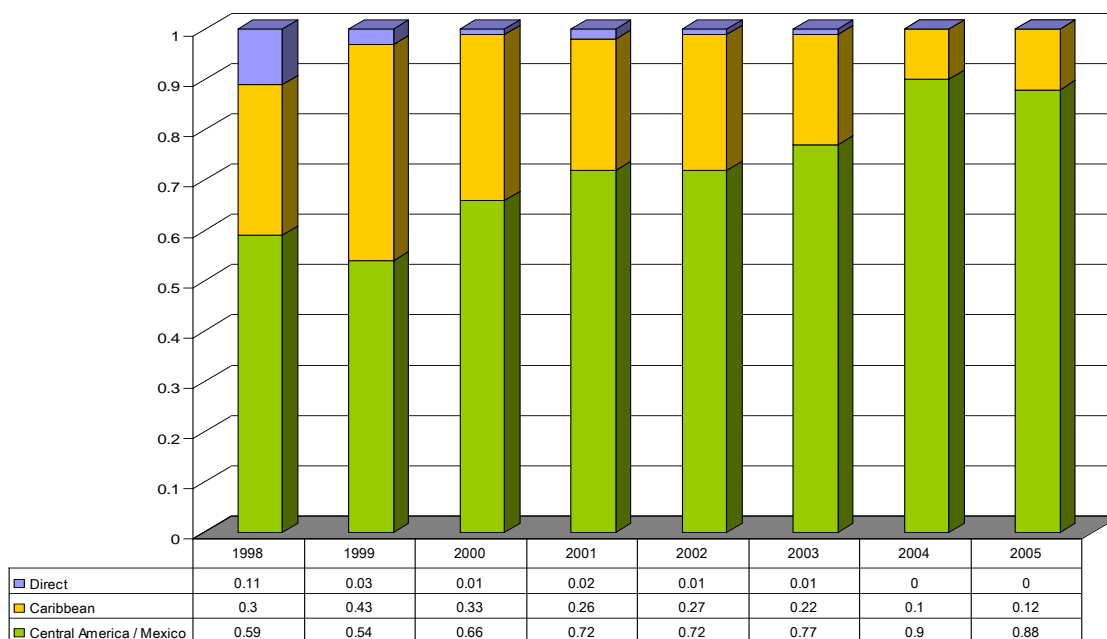
### High reward opportunities in the informal economy

Particularly relevant to the phenomenon of the alienation of working class males from formal education is the seizing of opportunities for economic gain associated with illegal globalised activities such as the trade in drugs and weapons.

Caribbean and Central American countries are well positioned as **trans-shipment points**.

Figure 6.2 illustrates the movement of cocaine through the Caribbean and Central America between 1998 and 2005 and although declining in the Caribbean is still significant. Although some females engage in drug-related activities, opportunities for engagement mainly appeal to young males. These opportunities although risky offer immediate gratification and, in my opinion, cannot be ignored in the search for explanations of male under-participation in the formal education system. In fact, reports coming out of Jamaica indicate that schools are targeted by this criminal element and school boys are actively recruited as ‘middle-men’ in the movement of these products both inside and outside of schools.

*Figure 6.2: Flow of Cocaine 1998-2005*



### **The Up and Coming Male Image**

Engagement in the music and sport industries is a further disincentive to boys remaining in school. When interviewed in a study of drop-outs many of the boys identified music and sport personalities as their role models and little wonder given the level of income that, with limited educational attainment, performers, mainly male, can generate through these activities. Further, opportunity to engage in these endeavours is now being supported by arrangements under the CSME which allows for the free movement of musicians and sports persons and this, in my opinion, has the potential to further exacerbate the problem of male drop-out from the formal education system.

### **7. The Way Forward**

In this presentation I have tried to examine the situation of in-school as well as out of school students with a focus on the situation of boys. The analysis points to the importance of a range of factors in determining educational outputs for both sexes but with socio-economic status being the main axis of differentiation. The problem of under-participation and under-performance, particularly of boys although both sexes affected, is more structural than it is ideological.

Lewis<sup>8</sup>, a noted Caribbean scholar articulates the concern in this regard much more succinctly and eloquently than I can. He states that:

*In many (academic) discourses.... [r]ather than contextualise the nature of the problem faced by men and women (in this instance boys and girls) in terms of structural determinants, many reduce the problematic to the level of the individual or the collectivity, so that the issue becomes conceptualized as pathology to be corrected without reference to wider social (economic, political) considerations. It is within this (structural) context that ideas of Caribbean male ..... crises (and the crisis of boys and education) have to be reconceptualised.*

Based on Lewis' comment and my own conviction that the problem we seek to address in understanding differences in performance is more structural than it is individual or collective in the study reported on there has been an attempt to take both the cultural and

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<sup>8</sup> Lewis, Linden. Lewis, Linden. 2004. Caribbean Masculinity at the Fin de Siecle. In: (ed). Redock, R. *Interrogating Caribbean Masculinities, Theoretical and Empirical Analyses*. UWI Press.

the political-economy perspectives into account and to address micro and macro level factors impacting schooling.

Consistent with this approach, a fairly recent World Bank Report<sup>9</sup> on Youth and Social Development in Trinidad and Tobago points to the need for a paradigm shift in research and policy formulation to address youth issues and recommended that: instead of a focus on negative outcomes related to single, univariate issues and interventions to treat these symptoms intended to avoid repetition of the event, there needed to be a shift which incorporates not only factors at the individual level but also takes into account the broader social, institutional and structural context of youth development and a focus on inter-related risk antecedents operating in these spheres. The report suggests that such an approach allows for an analysis of risk antecedents and behaviours that underlie negative outcomes and therefore to address causes rather than symptoms and to take a more integrated approach to addressing these inter-related factors.

It has also been posited (Williams, 2002)<sup>10</sup> that if governments want a more socially cohesive society characterised by less violence and a greater rate of human and social capital accumulation they are advised to go ‘further upstream’ and deal with the underlying *structural* problems that create the 20% of young people that cause 80% of youth problems in this region.

Over the two days of this conference you will be discussing the range of issues affecting Teacher Quality and Student Performance. As you do so, I urge you to take the advice to ‘move upstream’ and examine structural issues and so move towards solutions that will address root causes and not simply symptoms so that together we can build a region in which future generations, on whom the prosperity and peace of this region depends, can develop into rounded and productive citizens.

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<sup>9</sup> *Trinidad and Tobago Youth and Social Development: An Integrated Approach for Social Inclusion*. June 2000. Document of the World Bank. Report No. 20088 – TR.

<sup>10</sup> Williams, Lincoln. *A Review of the issues arising from selected quantitative and qualitative literature on youth in the Caribbean*. Draft LCSPG 2002. World Bank. Washington, D.C.