Working with Marginalized and 'Hidden' Populations: Researchers' Anxieties and Strategies for Doing Less Harmful Research

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Abstract
This article addresses some of the anxieties and concerns that up-and-coming or first-time researchers may have about doing research on gender and sexuality with illegalized and marginalized populations. Specifically, the paper addresses anxieties and concerns around gaining access to "hidden" study populations, developing trust, and the risk of misrepresenting or appropriating voices. In addressing these issues, I examine the contributions of feminist methodologies to the study of gender and sexuality and, in particular, the study of "hidden" populations such as sex workers and those engaged in same-sex relations. In doing so, I focus on two broader but interconnected methodological issues around doing "ethical" research. First, I highlight some of the various ways feminists have dealt with the manifestations of power imbalances within the research setting—especially when conducting interviews or undertaking ethnographic work—mainly in regards to gaining access to research populations, as well as seeking "truths" and constructing knowledge while avoiding causing preventable harm. I also identify some methodological points that may be appropriate to consider when researching illegalized and marginalized populations. Second, I scrutinize the advantages and disadvantages that are connected to doing research with illegalized and marginalized populations from an insider/outsider position. In particular, I ask, how does explicitly working from this subject-position shape research on illegalized and marginalized populations within the region?

Introduction and overview

Among the many anxieties and concerns researchers face are those concerning the feasibility of actually reaching those goals that initially made them excited about undertaking the particular project, the number of things that can and sometimes do go wrong throughout the process and, somewhere in all this, the fear of causing some form of harm to their participants or even to themselves. It goes without saying that for first-time researchers, this list may be even longer and the anxieties deeper. Moreover, many of these anxieties and concerns are further intensified and complicated when research focuses not on the powerful, but rather on the powerless, marginalized, and oppressed, as well as those who are seen as being "on the edge of society" or the so-called "hidden" populations.[i] For example, David Murray, who has published numerous works on Caribbean peoples' sexual politics and identity formations, speaks to this in the following statement:

> Yes, there is almost always some level of anxiety when doing research with sexual minority participants in the Caribbean, although I have found my level of anxiety is directly related to the interviewee's degree of being "out" in their community. For example, I was less worried when I was interviewing leaders of the local HIV/AIDS support groups, as they were already "out" in public arenas like the media and were thus well known in Barbados. However, my worries would increase when I was talking with men who were not "out" in their day-to-day lives, and who felt that disclosure of their sexual preference could be damaging or dangerous to them and/or their family (e-mail correspondence, October 12, 2011).

This article is, on one hand, my journey into self-reflection as a "diasporic" Caribbean subject, with an obvious insider/outsider subject-position, embarking on research within the Caribbean and particularly with a segment of the Caribbean population that may not only be described as marginalized, at least in some areas of their lives, but also "hidden" or on the "edge of society" due to their outlawed and socially stigmatized sexuality or perceived sexual practices.[ii] Thus, I examine some of my own anxieties and concerns about doing research on gender and sexuality with illegalized and marginalized populations that less experienced or first-time researchers may share at some point prior to and/or during their research process. Specifically, I address anxieties and concerns around gaining access to a "hidden" study population and the possibility of misrepresenting or appropriating voices, all of which reflect the overarching fears of failing to develop trust, or breaching such trust and thereby causing or doing harm. On the other hand, this paper is also an engagement with the existing contributions of feminist methodologies to the study of gender and sexuality and, in particular, the study of "hidden" populations such as sex workers and those engaged in same-sex relations.

This paper is divided into two sections. First, I will highlight some of the various ways feminists have dealt with the identified anxieties and manifestations of power imbalances within the research setting. In particular, I point up some methodological points, identified by Euro-American feminist researchers, as well as by Caribbeanists from both inside and outside the region that may be appropriate to consider when researching

illegalized and marginalized populations.[iii] Second, I scrutinize the advantages and disadvantages that are connected to doing research with illegalized and marginalized populations from an insider/outsider position. In particular, I ask, how does explicitly working from this subject-position shape research on illegalized and marginalized populations within the region? And, what are some of the concerns and anxieties that one may have when conducting research from these positions? This is in part my reflection on how others with a similar insider/outsider subject-position as my own contribute to research within the region and to Caribbean methodologies specifically. Of course, the indispensable importance of local Caribbeanists' ongoing sociocultural connectedness to or "on the ground knowledge" of development in these areas can hardly be overstated. Although this subject-position also has its own complexities and even disadvantages, there are certain undeniable benefits to living and doing research within the same region—such as having the opportunity, through various interactions, to hear the full range of local opinions on a topic of interest.

It is also important to emphasize here that there is often not a clear divide or dichotomy between the insider and the outsider, the local and the "diasporic" researcher, as a result of the fluidity of identities and interactions, as well as movements within and between cultural and national spaces. This means that even supposedly local Caribbean researchers may find themselves navigating the role of simultaneously occupying an insider/outsider position, depending on a number of interconnected factors including gender, sexuality, age, ethnicity, "race," color, education, religion, rural or urban location, and nationality. Indeed, in discussing the insider-outsider debate, Nancy Naples (2006, 140 cited in Chavez 2008, 476) "ultimately claims that '[i]nsiderness or outsiderness are not fixed or static positions, rather they are ever-shifting and permeable social locations that are differentially experienced and expressed by community members," and researchers must negotiate rapport within the spectrum of social identity. Her perspective suggests that whether insider or outsider, neither has a monopoly on advantage or objectivity (cited in Chavez 2008, 476).

Feminists' contributions
Feminists in general make four broad contributions that may be applied more generally to research with and for peoples who are oppressed, marginalized and/or belonging to "hidden" populations. These are (1) decentering of white heterosexual middle-class males in research as well as privileged non-white heterosexual middle-class males, particularly in the Caribbean context; (2) increasing awareness of differences; (3) identifying and seeking to address a range of methodological issues that draw attention to the workings of differential power within research; and (4) viewing research as empowering. These four broad contributions thus take into account a number of ethical issues that pertain to assessing truth, gaining access to a research population, and assigning authority to speak or to establish the facts, as well as researchers' apprehensions about doing harm through the (mis)representation and the appropriation of voices and texts.

Caribbean feminist researchers, in particular, have also contributed to the development of ethical research methodologies that seek to address the workings of power both within the research setting and the wider social, political, economic, and cultural environment in which women and other marginalized people live. This is perhaps most obvious in the

methodological goals and research material generated by the Women in the Caribbean Project (WICP). Although undertaken more than 30 years ago, this project is arguably one of the most comprehensive of its kind to date within the region. Specifically, it explicitly sought to formulate and engage with Caribbean feminists' research methodologies that center women's voices and experiences on a number of issues, though it ultimately dealt predominantly with Afro-Caribbean working-class women. Joycelin Massiah (1986), in her overview of the WICP, states that the aim was to create regional Caribbean feminist methodology and theoretical frameworks, rather than unquestioningly adopting pre-existing Euro-American models:

> Like women researchers in many regions of the world, WICP researchers were faced with the situation that knowledge of women's experiences in their region has been filtered through studies and methodological tools designed, conducted and interpreted by males. Personal experience and knowledge of their communities persuaded the group that a more accurate picture could be obtained by addressing issues other than the structure and function of family groups. The major objective of the project was therefore to identify the subjective meaning of the social realities which women face, the way these realities are manifested and the consequences at the individual, community and societal level. We wished to identify the gaps in our knowledge about women's activities, to try to fill these gaps and to identify areas for further research. The second major objective of the study was to devise a theoretical framework, which would integrate the analysis of women's roles as they are affected by processes of social change (1).

This need to create frameworks inspired by and reflective of Caribbean women's lived experiences thus expanded on feminists' understandings of the disparities between women and the differential workings and manifestations of power that shape their experiences. Caribbean feminist methodologies are, therefore, not simply derivative of existing Euro-American frameworks but are informed by and in turn produce knowledge, with its own drawbacks, about the complexities of women's experiences within the region. However, there are clearly some commonalities in the kinds of methodological (and ethical) concerns that these women and their counterparts in other regions of the world seek to address. Namely, in centering women in their research, they also had to contend with challenges around seeking to access often already marginalized communities, as well as determining who had the authority to speak and what could be counted as legitimate representations of Caribbean women's lives.

Of course, the above-identified anxieties or concerns are by no means unique to feminist researchers. Rather, social researchers have, in general, become more attentive to these ethical issues, especially as they relate to marginalized populations. Nevertheless, feminists have made tremendous contributions in highlighting these ethical issues long before they were seen as elements of common practice in mainstream social science methodologies. They continue to highlight these and other issues in their research,

teachings, and collaborations within and across academic disciplines and institutions. In fact, their commitment to starting research from the situated location, or with the self-identified problems, of any particular group of peoples in order to gain understandings of their concrete experiences, as well as their anticipation and expansion of what may be considered harmful, even unintentionally, arguably makes them better attuned than more traditionally oriented social science researchers to some of the ethical concerns that cause much anxiety and apprehension for researchers (Reinharz 1992, 27; see also Wolf 1996).

Addressing differential power

Feminists' ongoing attention to such issues is testimony to their commitment to addressing the workings of differential power within the research process. Indeed, when research includes the marginalized, oppressed, or those on the "edges of society," as Trudi James and Hazel Platzer (1999) point out, it is also equally important to widen our perceptions of who may be at risk for exploitation and harm in order to attend fully to the above-mentioned anxieties and ethical concerns. They argue as follows:

> Most often vulnerability is considered with regard to children and, more recently, elderly people and those who are mentally ill…there is a greater differential power imbalance between researchers and lesbians and gay men, partly as a result of… their marginalization and their lack of civil rights compared with their heterosexual counterparts. The risk of harm is therefore much greater… (James and Platzer 1999, 74).

Such harm includes the potential for the data not only to misrepresent voices, but also to further "perpetuate their outlaw status" through negative stereotyping as well as "identify[ing] them" or granting unwanted visibility, "invit[ing] voyeurism," "expos[ing] protective mechanisms," and "deepen[ing] the stigma that is attached to their culture" (ibid., 79-80). Similarly, in addressing his own anxiety about studying Caribbean gay men who are not "out," Murray speaks to the importance of being aware of the potential for causing harm, even through the most apparently innocuous interactions. He states the following:

> Some of these men told me that being seen with a white man in a public place like a restaurant or store could especially be risky because if someone they knew saw us together they would assume that the relationship must be sexual (why else would a white and black man be sitting together at a table in a restaurant) and "commercial" (i.e., the white man was most likely paying for the black man's meal, so the latter was therefore a prostitute). I thus became quite sensitive to the location and time in which I would meet with some participants, and I became more self-conscious of my own comportment and dress-style, in an attempt to minimize attention from others (e-mail correspondence, October 12, 2011).

In addition to addressing vulnerability as it relates to the manifestations of power within the research context, which are intimately linked to both the researcher's and

participant's subjectivities, including others' perceptions about these, Murray's statement is insightful as it also speaks to a number of other related anxieties and research issues. How do we work through our differences and get people, especially those who are most vulnerable to harm, to share their experiences with us, especially when we are considered outsiders? More importantly, how do we even begin to do research that is so fraught with power imbalances based on the differential positionalities of all those involved in the research process?

Gaining access

Throughout the years, feminist methodologies have impressed on us that research must begin with gaining and maintaining trust as well as developing good rapport or relations between the researcher and participants. Both of these issues may cause some apprehension for researchers seeking access to a potential study population, especially if they have no previous relationship or contact with this population. Kamala Kempadoo (2001) in her study on Caribbean sex workers, for instance, emphasizes this point when she notes that "the issue of gaining trust among sex-workers was critical. Rapport had to be established and confidentiality ensured before work could begin" (44). This may not be an easy process or one that automatically occurs when a researcher begins this stage of her or his work. Indeed, when working with certain marginalized, "hidden," and criminalized populations, such as sex workers and same-sex peoples in the Caribbean, experienced researchers have noted that "such studied invisibility made it particularly difficult for outsiders to access this population" (Carr 2003, 10). This difficulty in gaining access, as Robert Carr (2003) argues, may be experienced by researchers who also live within the region, but are constituted in this regard as outsiders, as a result of their lack of any initial affiliation with these frequently deeply underground communities. Consequently, "highly trusted gatekeepers" may become crucial to making such studies viable. In other words, one may have to rely on those individuals who are in a position to "permit access to others for the purpose of interviewing" (Miller and Bell 2005, 55) or who may facilitate, as Murray states, first introductions and interactions between researcher and respondents. In his study on identity formations among Martinicans, Murray (2002) recounts that he did not gain access straight away to the group of gay men that he writes about; rather, "[i]nformation about these people and places came very slowly—the turning point occurred after I identified myself as gay to a couple of men who turned out to be well connected to a network of gay men in the city and around the island" (12). Murray is thus simultaneously positioned here as both an outsider (as an Anglo-Canadian) and an insider (as a gay man) in relation to his study population. This, as I will discuss in more detail in the second half of this paper, creates a complex and somewhat ambiguous subject-position that may both foster and hinder fieldwork as well as the subsequent reception of research findings. Moreover, the possibility to be positioned simultaneously as both outsider and insider once again blurs the divide between the two, illustrating the ability to embody multiple roles and identities within the research process.

Although researchers may be dependent on the assistance and knowledge of gatekeepers, at least in the initial stages of our projects, we must be aware that often there may in turn be various degrees of power imbalances in the relations between us and the gatekeepers, as well as our potential participants. Specifically, feminists have cautioned us about the

"potential exercising of power by some individuals over others" (Miller and Bell 2005, 55). For example, Tina Miller and Linda Bell (2005) note that there is often an assumption that providing consent is a voluntary process. But the reliance on a gatekeeper, particularly one who can assert power within a group, raises questions pertaining to access, coercion, participation, and most importantly, voluntary informed consent. Indeed, "some potential participants may find resistance more difficult" (ibid., 56), especially where issues of gender, ethnicity and, I will argue, sexuality manifest. In Miller and Bell's study, the gatekeeper "volunteered or gave wholesale access to" seemingly "vulnerable powerless Bangladeshi women," who found it difficult not to participate because of the respect for and the importance of the gatekeeper to their daily survival (62). Such experiences no doubt not only make it difficult for the researcher to determine who is actually giving consent, but the researched may also not fully understand the implications of the consent. James and Platzer (1999), as well as Miller and Bell (2005), therefore, caution that even as we go about accepting the help of "valuable insiders" who can ostensibly minimize our anxieties around gaining access and the trust of potential research participants, consent should be ongoing and renegotiated between researcher(s) and participants throughout the research process. This gives participants the chance to re-evaluate their involvement in the study and withdraw if necessary, which may provide participants with some degree of protection against earlier unforeseeable discomforts, exploitation, and general harm.

Moreover, feminist researchers have also warned against the control that gatekeepers may try to assert over researchers themselves in exchange for facilitating access. Kempadoo (2001) shares her experience of this particular manifestation of power within the Caribbean research context:

> In some instances, however, officials acted as gatekeepers, attempting to censor the information collected and to control the researchers' movements. The fact that prostitution was by and large an illegal activity yet lined the pockets of many a business person, police officer or government official…meant that probes and investigation by, in particular feminist, researchers into the field could be viewed as a challenge to state or male complicity in the sex trade (44).

Needless to say, it is thus extremely important for first-time researchers, particularly those who are doing research with marginalized, oppressed, criminalized, and "hidden" groups, to practice great circumspection even as we eagerly pursue our research goals. Such care and caution, as Kempadoo argues, are "thus needed on the part of the researcher or teams to avoid placing themselves in a situation where they would be perceived as a threat by the authorities [even if these people were acting as facilitators] or where their investigations would harm sex workers" (ibid.). Kempadoo's appeal for care and caution is not, of course, an encouragement to kowtow to powerful gatekeepers, nor is it a dissuasion from doing potentially risky and important research; rather, it is simply a reminder to take heed of (though not be unduly deterred by) some of our anxieties, namely, around gaining access, trust and the likelihood of causing harm.

We might, for example, consider how my own trajectory informed my engagement with gatekeepers and experience as a researcher. I left Jamaica at age 17 and lived in Canada for about 11 years until I moved to Barbados in 2011. I have therefore "returned" to the *region* I had left—but to a specific *territory* I had never visited before. From being an insider/outsider as a Jamaican resident in Canada, in relation to Jamaica I might now be described as an insider/returnee/outsider, since some will consider that I have "returned"—that is, been received back into the bosom of the Anglophone Caribbean—but I am still self-evidently outside Jamaica and in some senses more removed from it than in Canada, as I no longer reside with Jamaican family members and my extended support network no longer predominantly comprises other Jamaicans.

Further, my sense of my "Jamaican-ness" now has different parameters: the inputs that trigger discussion of my Jamaican identity or self-reflection on it are now generated from an intra-Caribbean perspective, which views that identity somewhat differently from its extra-Caribbean, North American counterpart. For all "diasporic" subjects, the sense of origin is always emotionally lived as well as intellectually formulated; where the diasporic context changes, the emotions and self-formulations are also likely to change. When planning research in and about Jamaica, then, I must ask myself such questions as the following: How has my own history predisposed me to think about Jamaica, Jamaicans, and my own Jamaicanness? Is my viewpoint nostalgic? Do I feel any hint of unwarranted superiority over those who have not had as much opportunity to see Jamaica through the eyes of outsiders? Conversely, might I feel undue anxiety about being a "deracinated" Jamaican, causing me to over-identify in order to belong again? To what extent might I have unconsciously absorbed the ideological and political viewpoints of North American academia toward Jamaican sexual politics? Whilst it is unreasonable to ask anyone to identify the origins of all of their ideological positionings, it is reasonable that they should at least pose such questions to themselves and include such self-analysis transparently in their work so that others may draw their own conclusions.

On reflecting on these questions, I decided, from the onset of my doctoral dissertation research, that it would be beneficial to discuss these concerns, whenever possible, with other Caribbeanists, both from within and outside the region. This opportunity was made possible through my attendance at various conferences, including the yearly Caribbean Studies Association (CSA) event, as well as by intentionally contacting some individuals. Specifically, I sought out the help of more "knowledgeable individuals," a list of whom was determined by the individuals' research and theoretical experiences and/or cultural as well as on-the-ground knowledge. Of course, whilst I sought out their guidance and assistance, especially in the interviewing stages of my research, I always heeded the above-raised methodological (and ethical) concerns and advice, particularly in regard to being aware of various manifestations of power imbalances as well as the need to practice care and caution when relying on gatekeepers as well as those perceived to be "authentic insiders."

Consequently, whilst I welcomed the suggestions of my gatekeepers on certain issues, I was cautious not to hand over complete control to these persons to the extent that my research would reflect their interests instead of my own. These interactions, therefore, involved some amount of negotiation and much contemplation on my part. Still, they

were tremendously helpful, as I was given useful information on a number of issues, including possible literature to read, questions that may be seen as especially relevant to respondents, as well as recommendations about potential respondents and how to go about the business of recruiting these persons. For instance, I obtained a number of respondents through the help of one knowledgeable person who took an interest in my research topic; this person was able to recruit these respondents, some of whom were prominent members of the clergy, because of her prior relationship with those individuals. Thus, her strong recommendation served to validate, in the eyes of those respondents, both the study itself and my presence as the researcher.

Assessing "truths" and assigning authority to speak
Unfortunately, the potential for breaching trust and causing some form of avoidable harm to our participants can intensify as the research progresses from one stage to the next: as one digs deeper, the stakes may rise for participants and researchers alike. For example, in seeking information, the interviewer may ask questions that require the respondent to recall memories that she or he may feel uncomfortable sharing or even recalling at all. Worse still, some respondents, as I have most recently experienced in my role as a researcher for my dissertation project, may also interpret a question as a judgment on their beliefs and character. In such cases, respondents may show obvious signs of discomfort, choose not to address the question, and even become more guarded, impatient, or agitated in subsequent conversations. Fortunately, I was able to quickly rephrase my question when it became apparent that my respondents were becoming uncomfortable or defensive, based on cues such as changes in their facial expressions or posture, repeated clearing of the throat, or repetition of "disclaimers" to the effect that the views being expressed were not necessarily reflective of their affiliated organization.

Evidently, the recommendation to proceed with care and caution is thus not solely relevant to our interactions with gatekeepers or to those earlier phases of seeking access. In fact, many researchers develop justifiable concerns about misrepresenting or appropriating the voices of those they speak to, once they gain access and go about their business of doing data collection and analysis. Michelle Rowley (2002, 23), for example, expresses her moment of anxiety in regards to "scribing and translating" in final documentation of the complex expressions and representations of Caribbean women's identities that surfaced within the research context. This anxiety around representation and re-presenting the words of others raises a number of methodological questions, including "[w]here does the respondent end and the researcher begin?" And, "[i]n what ways do my choice of words and selection of narratives reflect my own concerns rather than the issues of the subjects being interviewed?" (ibid.) Although these questions may not always be easily answered, they are nevertheless pertinent to consider as they draw attention to the fact that knowledge, as Rowley identifies, is co-constructed and socially derived (thus blurring the divide between the researcher and the researched).

Shulamith Reinharz (1992) likewise points up the benefit of dialogue in knowledge construction to avoid misunderstandings or misrepresentations. According to Reinharz, researchers should start with the intention of trusting what the participant is saying. If, however, the researcher feels doubtful about the information he or she is receiving in the interview, for example, then the researcher should question the participant. Certainly,

there are a number of benefits that may be derived from analyzing moments of possible deception during interviewing. Namely, to avoid misrepresentations that may arise, even unconsciously, as people "editorialize" their experiences in the process of constructing narratives about them for consumption by others. Furthermore, analyzing moments of misrepresentation or outright deception may shed light on areas of sensitivity on the part of interviewees as well as assist the researcher to compile a repertoire of taboos held by the individual or even the larger community (interviewees who engage in criminal or stigmatized behavior, for example, may offer only a partial version of their actual range of experiences).

More problematically still, researchers must critically examine the very aim of seeking "truths" and the potentiality of silencing certain voices in the process. Accordingly, others, notably, Lorraine Code (2008), Judith Roof (2007), Michelle Rowley (2002), and Joan Scott (2008), further problematize not only the goal of seeking "truths" about an individual's experiences, but also the matter of how power manifests within the research context, thus influencing who gets trusted to speak accurately. Put differently, feminists such as the above-named, point out that besides more obvious concerns about the participants' possibly reporting lies, researchers also need to reflect on underlying issues of how we determine who has the authority to speak and to be believed, and how situated locations shape this process.

Similar to Rowley's (2002, 28) critique of "whether one talk can be seen as more legitimate or authentic than another," Roof (2007) astutely highlights the complication in assigning some people the role of "authentic" informants who have the unquestionable right to speak not only for themselves but for everyone within the group:

> Because it is their experience and because speakers have most often been disenfranchised in one way or another, these experiences and feelings are presumed to be genuine and unmediated — that is, oppressed people are more capable than others of communicating their experiences without inflecting these experiences with dominant ideologies or self-interest. They are imagined to speak from the heart…Situating such testimony as unassailable displaces issues of authority into the identities of those often deemed to be "other" (436).

This critique is crucial in that it warns against failing to recognize the partiality of people's knowledge based on their limited locations, as well as the danger of blindly assuming only similarities and not seeing significant differences, based on self-interest or relations to power, amongst those who claim—even if only implicitly—to be insiders or valid speakers of a group. Moreover, it speaks to, as Rowley (2002) also emphasizes, the possibility that dominant, historically constituted discourses also shape the knowledge or talk of the marginalized. This failure, mainly as it relates to wider matters about misrepresentation and appropriation of voices in research, has long been identified by Caribbean feminists as well as other feminists of color, in particular, who problematize the role of authenticity in traditional sociological "truth"-seeking processes (see, for examples, Hill-Collins 1991; Massiah 1986; Minh-ha 1989; Mohanty 2003; Narayan 1997; Rowley 2002; Tuhiwai Smith 1999).

Chandra Mohanty (2003, 17-42), for example, argues that Western feminists have produced an essentialist image of the average Third World woman (and I would argue that a similar homogenizing (mis)representation exists for the average Third World same-sex person) as being sexually constrained, ignorant, poor, uneducated as well as traditional, family- and domestic-oriented, all of which gets read as "victimized." One may, therefore, be inclined to reconsider the above-cited characterization of the Bangladeshi women in Miller and Bell's study as vulnerable, powerless, and completely dependent on the gatekeeper. We might consider, for example, to what extent might these women's relationships with the gatekeeper and their identities have been oversimplified in the authors' analysis as well as in my reinterpretation of their work? Obviously, these kinds of homogenizing misrepresentations, which Mohanty speaks of, have consequences for how these subjects are expected to speak and represent themselves in research. These expectations sometimes cause, as Trinh Minh-ha (1989) also argues, researchers to exclude or overlook, whether consciously or not, testimony that fails to confirm those expectations. Therefore, the construction of the authentic representative who is empowered to speak the "truth," unfortunately, erases multiple identities and situated positionalities of individuals within any given group, as well as masks varied power inequalities.

The above sentiments illustrate that it would be misguided to assume that dominant, essentializing, and potentially damaging ideologies, discourses, and language have no influence on the ways in which persons belonging to historically marginalized and oppressed groups understand and talk about their experiences. Thus, even as researchers set out to historicize experience and write about identity, we must take care, as Rowley (2002) advises, to encourage dialogue that is aimed at hearing multiple voices and the smaller, more tailored "truths" about experiences versus the more essentialized "Truth" of grand theory and master narratives. Equally importantly, researchers should recognize that the risk of misrepresentation is connected not only to the respondent's "lack of authority" to speak about or represent the experiences of others, but, as Code (2008) notes, is also connected to the fact that "experiences are not simply reported; rather, they must be heard, read, understood and interpreted" (271).

The key question for researchers, as Code suggests then, simply becomes, "How do we do this [research] without misrepresenting or distorting what is being said?" (ibid.) Moreover, "if power is inherent in the construction of experience, how can feminist researchers struggle against dominant categories of interpretations or decide whose account is authoritative?" (ibid.) Like the scholars Code, Minh-ha, and Roof, Linda Alcoff (2008) challenges us to begin asking "whether or not this is a legitimate authority" (485). But more importantly, "[i]s the discursive practice of speaking for others ever a valid practice, and, if so, what are the criteria for validating? In particular, is it ever valid to speak for others who are unlike me or who are less privileged than me?" (ibid.) These concerns have long been connected to researchers' apprehensions about the danger of misrepresenting what people say in the final write up or analysis, particularly on the part of those who work with any marginalized and oppressed group (Alcoff 2008; DeVault 1999; James and Platzer 1999; Rowley 2002), or of textually appropriating the voices of others for their own interests (Opie 2008).

Solutions to these problems range from avoiding interpretations altogether to including multiple interpretations or seeing research as a collaborative process (see DeVault 1999; Opie 2008; Reinharz 1992). The former, however, seems to be the least attractive choice amongst many feminists who argue that "to be consistent with the feminist principle of empowerment, one cannot discard the interpretative work" of the researcher (Sprague and Zimmerman 2004, 49). However, instead of speaking for, the researcher must aim for "speaking to, in which the intellectual neither abnegates his or her discursive role nor presumes an authenticity of the oppressed but still allows for the possibility that the oppressed will produce a 'counter sentence' that can then suggest a new historical narrative" (Alcoff 2008, 491). Similarly, Anne Opie (2008, 365-6) calls for a "deconstructive textual practice," which refers to the ability to recognize the constraints of certain ideologies on the data as well as the various insights to be gained when researchers and participants share the interpretative work. This may mean, for example, including direct quotes or participants' interpretations alongside that of the researcher's (ibid.). These approaches are somewhat in line with Rowley's preference, on the one hand, for "the act of voicing"—that is allowing women to "speak for themselves, name their experiences and make their own connections" (Massiah cited in Rowley 2002, 25)—and on the other hand, her analysis of the "talk of the narrative" (ibid., 28-29). The latter refers to the approach of treating the performance of talk, and by extension the act of voicing, as both an individual and collective activity that is also informed by the social site of production and not by notions of authenticity.

In addition, "feminist strategies" for avoiding misrepresentation and appropriation are concerned broadly with addressing differential power relations between the researcher and the researched and the aspiration to empowerment of the latter through the research itself. Researchers must thus recognize that there may be significant differences between themselves and the people they do research with, and this will have a great impact on the research process. For example, our differences based on such markers as "race," class, sexuality, nationality, gender, age, ethnicity, and religion (as will be expanded on in the ensuing paragraphs) may determine our ability to access certain marginalized and "hidden" groups as well as influence what we are able to hear, see, understand, and write once we gain access (see James and Platzer 1999; Kempadoo 2001; Miller and Bell 2005; Murray 2002; Parry 2002). Accordingly, researchers must openly acknowledge the position, oftentimes one of privilege, from which they ask questions and make interpretations. In doing research in Martinique on identity formation, Murray (2002) was thus aware throughout the process that his "presence as a 'white' man may have censored the expression of other beliefs, feelings, or opinions among both gay and straight Martinican men as the white/black racial dyad has a major structuring influence in Martinican social life…" (12). As such, Murray knew that his position—including the language barriers between him and many of his respondents who often shifted rapidly from French to Créole or mixed these languages in public discussions—limited what he would hear, see, ask, and even understand. This awareness guides and contributes to the richness of his analysis.

The insider/outsider subject position

The discussion thus far has referred only tangentially to the important methodological issue of the benefits and disadvantages of doing research from the insider or outsider position. This is an issue that continues to garner much attention in a wide range of research methodologies, including those identified as feminist. For this reason, it is not surprising that it is also considered and debated over by researchers, including Carr, Kempadoo, Murray, and Parry, who do work on and with Caribbean peoples, particularly those belonging to oppressed, marginalized, and hidden populations. Of course, for these Caribbean and/or Caribbeanist researchers, as for many others not connected to the region, the concern over the insider or outsider position, as highlighted in previous paragraphs, is linked to wider methodological debates about the feasibility of doing certain research and, more generally, the complication of identity formation and "truth" seeking.

There is a consensus amongst many researchers, including the above-named Caribbeanists, that both positions have various strengths and limitations attached to them; in fact, one only has to browse through the pages of most undergraduate methodologies or methods textbooks to see this position being argued. However, researchers have further complicated our understandings of these roles by not only noting the advantages and disadvantages of being either an insider or an outsider, but of being both simultaneously. Caribbeanists, who live both within and outside the region, in particular, have also made tremendous contributions in interrogating this latter position of being both an insider and an outsider or an "outsider within," thus contributing to and drawing on an existing body of knowledge developed by feminists of color such as Patricia Hill Collins (1991), and Third World feminists like Uma Narayan (1997) and Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999). For example, Murray states as follows:

> I think both statuses have strengths and limitations. I am quite sure that as a national racial outsider (i.e., Canadian/white), some Bajans have limited their conversational topics with me, and that I have missed particular themes or concepts in their answers because I am not familiar with some aspects of local knowledge or language. However, I think my outsider status is sometimes advantageous, especially with marginalized groups who are "outsiders" in their own society, and may feel more comfortable speaking to someone from outside their community. In fact, I find this complicates the outsider/insider binary, as I may be simultaneously outsider/insider in certain research contexts (i.e., working with lgbtq communities in other societies) (e-mail correspondence, October 12, 2011).

Likewise, Andil Gosine notes there is not an easy division between the statuses of "outsider" and "insider." Indeed, there will always be an "almost indeterminate number of divisions in groups, and different characteristics are going to make one 'inside' and 'outside' a group" (e-mail correspondence, November 15, 2011). Nevertheless, Gosine further declares that "I am both and neither in relation to my own research [on Caribbean sexualities]. I am from and deeply affectionate about the issues related to the Caribbean that I research, but I have spent so much of my life outside the region that I would not characterize me as an insider. Different experiences bring a different set of perspectives

and questions to research; sometimes those seem advantageous, sometimes they don't" (ibid.).

On the one hand, for the above researchers, particularly Murray, being seen as simply an outsider would not only impede research but also pose a problem in the later stages of presenting the findings to an "insider" audience, who may tend to be dismissive or unduly critical of the researcher's ability to comprehend and empathize with a particular experience. Murray recalls, for instance, that

> [there was] one woman who[m] I interviewed for my research on sexual rights and homophobia in Barbados who was very helpful in providing answers to my questions about changing attitudes towards homosexuals in Barbados. A few months later, I met her again in a classroom where I was presenting some of my findings. She raised her hand to tell me that I "didn't get it", and that she didn't think someone "like me" would ever be able to understand "how things work here" (e-mail correspondence, October 12, 2011).

Whilst it is often difficult to rebut *in situ* this kind of blanket dismissal made on the basis of a supposed local complexity that the "outsider" can never hope to grasp, such dismissals may often mask emotional discomfort arising precisely from the fact that the purported outsider is, in fact, "getting" a local behavior the speaker would rather not have aired publicly. Suffice to say Murray was not unduly deterred by this exclusionary move on the part of a formerly cooperative respondent.

On the other hand, Odette Parry (2002) complicates the insider/outsider binary when she notes that while there are advantages to being perceived as a "cultural insider,"

> [a]t the same time there were conversations which occurred between myself and respondents which happened precisely because I was seen as different, foreign, and "temporary." These characteristics made me less "threatening" or "important," and hence topics were raised which would have seemed dangerous to share with a Jamaican researcher (99).

Despite this, however, Parry acknowledges that though being an "outsider did afford me privileged access to some areas of some women's lives, it compensated poorly for what was lost through the fact I had little experience in common with the participants" (ibid., 101).

Thus, the consensus amongst these Caribbeanists is that the position of the simultaneous insider/outsider may be the most advantageous of the three roles when doing certain types of research within the Caribbean. Put differently, certain types of research, particularly those involving marginalized, oppressed, and hidden groups, may require both familiarity but also some degree of distance or detachment from certain aspects of the participants' lives or from wider cultural norms; without this ambivalence, researchers may find it difficult, if not impossible, to gain access to potential participants, gain their trust, get them to talk without feeling judged, and avoid causing serious but likely preventable harm to everyone involved. Kempadoo (2001) sums this up as follows:

> Being in an outsider position in the very specific local context, yet familiar with Caribbean societies in general…enabled the researcher to feel more comfortable with entering the arena, particularly because she was not hindered by knowledge of local taboos…or the possibility that a friend or relative may see her in a place of "ill-repute" (45).

One can, therefore, certainly argue that this unique position of having some degree of familiarity but also distance may potentially result in the researcher being able to provide certain valuable insights and contributions to empowerment and knowledge production. Indeed, as Patricia Hill Collins (1991) asserts, simultaneously occupying the unique position of "nearness and remoteness…" has the advantage of the "tendency for people to confide in a 'stranger' in ways they never would with each other; and…the ability of the 'stranger' to see patterns that may be more difficult for those immersed in the situation to see" (36).

Additionally, the position of insider/outsider may afford some researchers, particularly those who are able to cross cultural and national borders, the privilege of developing critical knowledge and understandings about certain "controversial" issues on the basis of the possibility of asking certain questions that challenge oppressive systems of power and cultural customs throughout the region without the fear or risk of experiencing certain harm, including ongoing socioeconomic marginalization. One example of this is Alexander's (1994) groundbreaking work that confronts normalizing systems of power, namely, heteropatriarchy, which position certain bodies as non-citizens within their nations of birth, or as abject objects of ridicule, mockery, rejection, and even violence (see also Alexander 2005, 2007). Others have followed suit by interrogating these extremely sensitive and "taboo" issues relating to sexual citizenship, homophobia, and sexuality, in general (see, for examples, Silvera 1997; Kempadoo 2004; Crichlow 2004; Wekker 1997; 2006). Thus, Gosine writes that in regard to doing his own research on Caribbean queer sexualities, his position as someone from, but not residing in, the Caribbean means that "there is a great deal less political and personal risk. I can raise questions without fear of losing my job and with the security of mobility and citizenship. I do think there are more risks involved for people working within the region because they are held to account in more direct and vulnerable ways" (e-mail correspondence, November 15, 2011). However, the researcher who identifies with an insider/outsider status must nevertheless proceed with extreme caution, as Kempadoo (2001) recommends, to avoid harm, especially to participants who are oftentimes highly vulnerable and who do not have the recourse of seeking security elsewhere.

Acknowledgment of the privilege of being able to cross national and cultural borders and thereby avoid negative repercussions does not, of course, imply that critical knowledge on matters related to sexuality has not also always been produced by people who still reside within the region and who risk political, social, and economic backlash and isolation. Indeed, a rich body of literature exists comprising a number of qualitative and quantitative studies by regionally based Caribbeanists. These include Robert Carr's (2003, 2009) examination of homosexuality, sex work, violence, HIV/AIDS, and human rights in Jamaica; Cecil Gutzmore's (2004) study on policing homosexuality in Jamaican

popular culture; and Ian Boxill's (2011) most recent analysis of attitudes toward homosexuality in Jamaica. Others, such as Christine Barrow (2009), also focus on young women's naming and complex ownership of their sexualities. In addition, legal scholar Tracy Robinson (1999, 2003, 2004, 2009) has long been engaged in the broader analysis of the configuration of sexuality and gender in citizenship projects in the Anglophone Caribbean, particularly in regards to processes of legislative reforms. These "insiders" may of course be seen as having the genuine advantage of granular knowledge of the society on a day-to-day basis. However, as previously suggested, they also experience methodological challenges in various capacities, some of which are connected to their perceived insider status, or to the reality that they are in fact never total insiders considering the complexity around identity formation and the researcher's role in particular. Furthermore, as with the experience of some researchers who are not locally or regionally based within the Caribbean, the very nature of the research subject may also create certain challenges. For example, Ian Boxill (2011) identifies that one of the major challenges faced in conducting focus group research on homosexuality was that "[m]any of the potential participants upon hearing of the topic were less than eager and some very adamant that they wanted no part of any discussion with homophobia and homosexuality as the headline. This was especially more pronounced in the attempts to organize the rural groups…" (11). Fortunately, the research team had anticipated such challenges because of their knowledge of the social desirability bias to avoid answering various types of questions or not tell the truth.

Nevertheless, the privilege of being able to cross national as well as cultural borders and thereby avoid negative repercussions further complicates understanding of the insider/outsider position. Specifically, how is the status of being insider/outsider viewed by those who claim cultural authenticity? Or rather, how is the subject position of being an insider/outsider problematized and challenged by those who are concerned with issues of cultural authenticity and the right to represent? These are important questions to consider, especially as they relate to wider research anxieties about gaining access to research settings and populations, building trust, and producing work that will be read not as appropriations or misrepresentations, but as legitimate representations by others, particularly by those who make claims to being "authentic insiders" or "cultural experts." My own research experiences, for example, again illustrate complexities around being perceived simultaneously as both an insider/outsider based on the cultural and national. Specifically, although I depended on "knowledgeable insiders" to act both as respondents and gatekeepers in my own dissertation research, my identity as a Jamaican and returnee to the region, arguably, informed respondents' reception of me. This was evident by the expressed approval of my "return" and interest in my place and culture of origin by many respondents. Additionally, the fact that I now live in Barbados also somewhat complicated how I was received and treated by some. On the one hand, this was treated by a few as evidence of my ongoing disconnect, thus further nuancing understandings of the "insider"/"outsider" subject-position. On the other, this was embraced by some, who were more familiar with or had lived in other countries in and outside the region, as a mutual opportunity on which to build rapport and make critical comparisons.

Conclusion

In closing, the existing sociopolitical atmosphere within the Caribbean toward such matters as homosexuality, for instance, makes it difficult if not potentially dangerous, for both researchers and respondents, to carry out research with particular populations. Whilst this has not stopped researchers from doing research on these so-called "hidden" populations, as Carr and others identify, it may inevitably place certain limits on such things as access to potential participants, the number and types of people that will eventually participate in the research, and the diversity of their experiences, thereby influencing or limiting the kinds of knowledge and discussions that can ensue from the fruits of these research projects—books, conference presentations, and policy recommendations. Still, there is an increasing body of work developing within the Caribbean on such vulnerable populations as same-sex peoples.

Nonetheless, there will always be room for further research and analysis as the status and experiences of such populations evolve. I have thus argued that although the subject-position of being an insider/outsider thus creates its share of obstacles, the contributions made from this position and the potential for initiating further research in this and other areas of sexuality cannot be overlooked or downplayed. However, researchers must first and foremost proceed with much caution and care when attempting to carry out such work. This may, as this paper highlights, be difficult at times, especially when dealing, as honestly as possible with the anxieties that we may have about failing as researchers as well as the various issues, some expected and others unforeseeable, that may arise throughout the research process.

Still, those with more experience in doing research, specifically with marginalized, oppressed, and hidden populations within the Caribbean, have imparted some important advice for doing less harmful, more ethical research. First, we must recognize that at times we may have to modify our behaviors, research goals, context, and methods in order to avoid doing harm to ourselves and/or others. Second, we should not be so naïve as to think that because the researcher is guided by ostensibly empowering feminist methodologies, the research context, particularly the development of relationships and roles, is therefore free of hierarchy, power imbalances, and the potential for violation and abuse of both the researcher and/or the respondents. Third, we must not be too quick to claim, embrace, or seek out what are being labeled as "authentic" experiences or representations. Instead, we should recognize not only our, but also the participants' "limited location," which informs the partiality of vision and knowledge. In doing so, we can avoid much of the dangers of misrepresenting and even invalidating or erasing the voices as well as the experiences of others through our research. Fourth, it is important to expand our understanding of what constitutes harm; when research includes marginalized, oppressed, or hidden populations, it is equally important to widen our perceptions of who may be at risk for exploitation and harm. As researchers, we must also recognize that the potential for doing harm is not confined to those initial stages of the research process, but may persist long after the research has been completed.

Finally, first-time researchers, including those doing research in the Caribbean with hidden, marginalized, and oppressed populations, may seek to overcome power imbalances between themselves and their participants by aiming for reciprocity and collaboration in the research relationship at the various stages (Holland and Ramazanoglu

1994), hence avoiding such harm as exploitation, misrepresentation, and appropriation. This may include something as small as having participants read—or if necessary your discussing with them—your written analysis at various stages before it is presented to a wider audience or sent off for publications, or including some of their interpretations, as Alcoff (2008) notes, alongside that of the researcher(s)'. Although this relationship may be the ideal, at least in theory, it may be difficult to implement in all research settings, especially when "there is conflict between the requirements made of a researcher through their membership of an academic or disciplinary community and the needs and interests" (Holland and Ramazanoglu 1994, 136) of the people they research.

Collaboration, at least between researchers who share similar research interests and goals may, however, be more feasible. For example, collaboration between researchers living outside the Caribbean and those who still live within the region may be a highly fruitful strategy for doing research within the region on marginalized and hidden populations, allowing for both positionings to be "triangulated" to generate a more nuanced account. Whether collaboration proves to be impossible or only attainable and useful in its most limited forms, however, it is important that research relationships, in order to maintain harmony and a check on power imbalances, be guided by reciprocal respect (see Smith 1999, 120).

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Email Correspondence

Gosine, Andil, e-mail message to Latoya Lazarus. November 15, 2011 (on file with author).

Murray, David A. B., e-mail message to Latoya Lazarus. October 12, 2011 (on file with author).

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[i] Within feminist literature, a diverse group of people including sex workers (Kempadoo 2001), gays and lesbians (Alexander 2007; Blackwood 1995; Carr 2003; James and Platzer 1999; Murray 2002), sexually active youth (Holland and Ramazanoglu 1994), and women who have experienced domestic abuse, fall under the categorization of being not just amongst the oppressed and marginalized groups but also "hidden" populations. This is largely a contextually situated categorization, based on people having certain experiences and/or identities that are considered extremely "private," "deviant," and tabooed, or their even being criminalized because they counter dominant norms and value systems within specific

communities and their larger societies. Consequently, these people become further silenced, marginalized, stigmatized, shamed, and thus perpetually forced to remain "hidden" in their coexistence with the perceived unsympathetic and scrutinizing "majority."

[ii] It is important to identify here that I have, since first drafting this article, completed most of my "field" research. I am currently analyzing and writing up these findings, which will comprise my doctoral dissertation.

[iii] By "Caribbeanist," I mean people interested in, and who do work on, the Caribbean. This category includes a wide range of academics and researchers, including both those who were born and still live within the region and those who have migrated to other places that make up the Caribbean Diaspora. It also includes those who were neither born nor ever lived within the region. However, the uniting factor that makes such people "Caribbeanist" is the centrality of various aspects of the Caribbean in their work.