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Rollins, Judith

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NEVISIAN WOMEN'S GENDER CONSCIOUSNESS: CONTENT AND SOURCES

Judith Rollins

ABSTRACT

This article identifies the gender-related concerns of contemporary Nevisian women and the factors that have informed those concerns. Through an exploration of the major trends in Nevisian history and through an examination of the ideas and life experiences of forty interviewees, this research seeks to understand how gender inequalities evolved, how contemporary Nevisians perceive those inequalities, and what those perceptions reveal about the sources of gender consciousness. The article concludes (1) that the main current concerns of Nevisian women are pervasive low pay, inadequate financial and emotional support from fathers, violence against women and girls, gender discrimination in employment (especially in the private sector), the lack of women in politics, and the negative social effects of tourism; and (2) that the major factors contributing to Nevisian women's contemporary consciousness of gender inequities are women's involvement in the labor emigration that began in the 1950s, Nevis's improved economy since 1991, and the influence of the international women's rights movement (through both St. Kitts-Nevis's involvement with international organizations—especially, the United Nations—and individual Nevisians' exposure to the international discourse on women's issues).

Keywords: Nevisian women, International Women's Movement, Gender and development, Sociology of Caribbean women, Caribbean emigration, Gender inequality

RESUMEN

Este artículo identifica preocupaciones de las mujeres nevisianas relacionadas con el género y los factores que han informado sobre dichas preocupaciones. A través de una exploración de las tendencias principales en la historia nevisiana y a través de un examen de las ideas y experiencias de vida de cuarenta personas entrevistadas, esta investigación busca comprender cómo evolucionaron las desigualdades de género, cómo perciben los nevisianos contemporáneos dichas desigualdades, y lo que esas percepciones revelan sobre las fuentes de las cuales proviene la conciencia del género. El artículo concluye (1) que las preocupaciones principales actuales de las mujeres nevisianas son la persistencia de un salario mal remunerado para las mujeres, un apoyo financiero y emocional inadecuado por parte de los padres, la violencia en contra de mujeres y niñas, la discriminación por género

en el empleo (especialmente en el sector privado), la falta de presencia de mujeres en el sector político, y los efectos sociales negativos del turismo; y, (2) que los factores principales que contribuyen a la conciencia de las mujeres nevisianas sobre la desigualdad de género son la participación de las mujeres en la emigración laboral que comenzó en los años 50, las mejoras en la economía de Nevis a partir del año 1991, y la influencia del movimiento internacional de los derechos de las mujeres (tanto a través de la participación de St. Kitts-Nevis con organizaciones internacionales —especialmente las Naciones Unidas— y la exposición individual de los nevisianos al discurso internacional sobre asuntos relacionados con las mujeres.

Palabras clave: mujeres nevisianas, Movimiento Internacional de las Mujeres, género y desarrollo, sociología y mujeres caribeñas, emigración caribeña, desigualdad de género

RÉSUMÉ

Cet article présente les inquiétudes portant sur le rôle des femmes néviciennes d'aujourd'hui et les facteurs qui ont provoquées. Au travers d'une étude des tendances les plus importantes de l'histoire de Nevis et de l'examen des idées et des expériences de la vie de quarante personnes interviewées, cette étude cherche à comprendre comment les inégalités des rôles de l'homme et de la femme ont évolué, comment les Néviens contemporains perçoivent ces inégalités et ce que ces perceptions indiquent au sujet des origines du rôle de l'homme et celui de la femme dans la société névicienne. L'article conclut (1) que les inquiétudes les plus importantes chez la femme Névicienne à l'heure actuelle sont la prédominance des bas salaires, l'insuffisance du soutien financier et émotif de la part des pères, la violence envers les femmes et les jeunes filles, la discrimination des sexes au niveau de l'emploi (en particulier dans le secteur privé), l'absence de femmes en politique et les effets sociaux négatifs du tourisme; et (2) que les facteurs principaux qui contribuent à la prise de conscience contemporaine des injustices entre hommes et femmes sont la participation des femmes à l'émigration pour le travail qui a commencé au cours des années 50, l'amélioration de l'économie de Nevis depuis 1991 et l'influence du mouvement des droits internationaux des femmes (par le biais à la fois de la participation de Saint Kitts-Nevis à des organismes internationaux —en particulier, les Nations Unies— et de l'exposition individuelle des Néviens au discours international sur les questions concernant les femmes).

Mots-clés: femmes néviciennes, Mouvement international des femmes, rôle des hommes et des femmes et développement, sociologie des femmes aux Caraïbes, émigration dans les Caraïbes, inégalités entre hommes et femmes

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To me, women in Nevis are in such pain. And that's all I see. I say it all the time: they're in such pain! (Forty-three-year-old secondary schoolteacher)

The women of Nevis are not unique in being "in pain." Like most women of the world, they are emerging from a fairly recent system of taken-for-granted patriarchy. Like many women, too, they are emerging from a colonial situation that devalued their culture and was designed to perpetuate their disempowerment. But they are emerging with a unique set of skills and traditions, some from their African heritage, some from their efforts to reconcile the European values imposed on those West African traditions by the English colonizers, some from having survived one of the harshest slavery systems in the Western hemisphere, and some from the extraordinary "migration culture" of the island of Nevis. With those skills and through the lens of that history as it is confronted by the international movement of women against patriarchal injustices, Nevisian women are defining for themselves what they want for themselves.

This article is an exploration of Nevisian women's perceptions of the major issues facing them, the factors that have contributed to those perceptions, and what those factors reveal about the significance of the international community in affecting national thinking and policies. Because the identification and framing of a problem inform whether and how it's addressed, and because the amount of support for change reflects the level of consensus that change is needed, it's self-evident that understanding what issues are defined as problematic by most women is an important first step in predicting the direction and emphases of future reforms. Less obvious, perhaps, are the processes by which people and policies change, how issues become defined as problematic, and the reality that some national policies are altered without a consensus or without even the support of most of the population. By exploring the relationships between the level of individual women's awareness and their social backgrounds, and between national policies and international values, we can begin to identify the processes by which policies are changed and individuals' gender consciousness is raised. This exploration, too, will suggest the emphases of future reforms for Nevisian women. However, in order to appreciate the context of the issues raised and the sources of contemporary Nevisians' concerns and of national policies, a brief discussion of the major trends in Nevisian history and of the current situation for Nevisian women is necessary.

NEVIS YESTERDAY AND TODAY

Nevis is part of the two-island federated nation of St. Kitts-Nevis, located in the chain of Leeward Islands in the Eastern Caribbean. Nevis is the smaller of the two islands, with only 36 square miles (93 square kilometers) and a population of approximately 11,000 (*Nevis Statistical...2006*).

The nation has an unusual political structure. The prime minister and national assembly are based in St. Kitts. The national assembly has fourteen seats, of which three are appointed and eleven are elected, all for five-year terms. Of those elected seats, eight are for Kittitians and three are for Nevisians. Nevertheless, Nevis also has its own premier and a separate assembly to deal with local legislation. As will be seen, the policies of the Nevisian administration are not always consistent with those of the federation government.

The population of Nevis is overwhelmingly of African descent. Unlike other Caribbean islands (including St. Kitts), there are no white descendants of the former colonizers. Whites on the island are mainly recent expatriates from England, Canada and the United States. The population is also overwhelmingly Christian, mainly of the Anglican and Methodist denominations, the first and second churches brought to the island in the early seventeenth and late eighteenth centuries, respectively, from England during colonialism (Olwig 1993a:69-89).

Its history is similar to that of other Caribbean islands. Its original inhabitants were Native Americans, first Ciboneys, then Arawaks, then Caribs. However, the advent of the Europeans into the Caribbean, with their program of conquest (which included, when necessary, intentional genocide), led to the near complete disappearance of the Indians. The English—with the French on St. Kitts—mounted a campaign to enslave or eliminate the Native American population. And by the end of the seventeenth century, only a small number of Native Americans remained on Nevis, all enslaved and working on English-owned plantations (Hubbard 1996:9, 68).

The first group of approximately eighty English settlers moved from St. Kitts to Nevis in 1628. And, although England's control over St. Kitts and Nevis was challenged militarily for the next one hundred years by both the Spanish and the French (with a period of co-occupation of St. Kitts in the seventeenth century), the British presence and colonization of Nevis was consistent for over three hundred and fifty years, until St. Kitts-Nevis gained its independence in 1983 (Olwig 1993a:23; Hubbard 1996).

Columbus introduced sugar cane to the Caribbean (Hispaniola, first) on his second voyage. Bringing the crop to the Caribbean repre-

sented an expansion of the sugar cane industry which had begun in the Eastern Mediterranean and expanded as far as Madeira¹ by the late fifteenth century. It's noteworthy that slave labor had been used in this Mediterranean enterprise since the twelfth century. Predictably, some of the enslaved Caribs and Arawaks that the Spanish had been using in the gold mines and in agriculture were immediately put to work in the cane fields. However, in addition to raiding other islands to replace the numbers of Indians dying from disease and overwork, the Spanish also brought enslaved Africans as early as 1505 to work in the mines and, then, on sugar cane estates (Richardson 1983:8-10).

Because of sugar cane cultivation, the late seventeenth century and early eighteenth century saw extensive deforestation and soil erosion on Nevis, and an increasing number of plantation owners returning to England and leaving the management of their estates to overseers (Richardson 1983:12). Looking at St. Kitts, Gussler identifies these three effects of the introduction of sugar cane cultivation: the demise of small-scale farming and the exodus of many poor Europeans; the importation of large numbers of enslaved Africans; and the development of a "plantation type of socioeconomic organization" (1980:187).

While the treatment of enslaved people on Nevis by plantation owners had been brutal, the treatment by overseers was even worse because overseers' "immediate concern was to profit themselves and to show a profit to the owner, regardless of the treatment of slaves which this might entail ..." (Olwig 1993a:41). Throughout the history of slavery on Nevis, in fact, there is evidence that suggests slavery was particularly harsh on this island. "Indeed, the slave death rate was incredibly high [on St. Kitts and Nevis] during the latter part of the seventeenth century... 'Reasons' for the exceptionally high slave mortality rates at this time include malnutrition exacerbated by drought, disease prevalence, execution, and accident" (Richardson 1983:62). The unusual passage of legislation protecting *slaves'* rights is an indication of particularly egregious behavior toward the enslaved.²

Nevis had become a port of entry for the Leeward Islands slave trade in 1675 and remained that until 1730. Although it was estimated that 22 percent of enslaved Africans died during the Middle Passage (i.e., the journey from Africa to the New World), "Nevis planters selected the best of the survivors for themselves" (Hubbard 1996:61).

Despite Nevis's having 'the best,' a Scottish-born Anglican priest wrote in 1727 that "two fifths or more of the arriving slaves died while becoming 'seasoned' on Nevis" (63). This exceptionally harsh form of slavery continued into the nineteenth century (and, as will be seen, may still be influencing cultural norms today, especially the widespread physical punishment of children and pervasive domestic violence).

The seemingly endless supply of Africans (until the abolition of the slave trade in 1807) not only meant neglect and sometimes brutality toward enslaved people, it also meant slaveowners' discouraging of families and motherhood itself among the enslaved on Nevis through the early nineteenth century. The motive was, again, financial: "planters were not...interested in encouraging the birth of children on the part of slave women...[T]his was...because the lost labor from the mother combined with the high death rate of the children and the cost of rearing them until they could work quite simply did not make the breeding of children profitable" (Olwig 1993a:51). Of course, enslaved people did form families and have children, and the importance of family to the enslaved people is evident in their customs (50-53); but it's noteworthy that the institution of the family, so fundamental in the African societies from which the enslaved came, was under assault for the first century of Africans' presence on the island of Nevis.

As elsewhere in the New World, enslaved women worked mainly in the fields, as domestic servants, and for their own households. The economic division of labor between spouses was, typically, the husband taking responsibility for the cultivation of provision crops which the wife then marketed. Some enslaved men had more than one wife, a practice seen by the English as evidence of their being 'uncivilized' but which, in fact, was evidence of status in many of the West African ethnic groups from which the enslaved had come. Women who worked as domestics were especially vulnerable to sexual exploitation by their owners and members of their owners' family. As throughout the New World, the rape of enslaved women was commonplace, partly because it was an effective weapon of counterinsurgency (Sudarkasa 1981, 1982; Davis 1998:122-127; Olwig 1993a:51-52).

Slavery was abolished in the British Empire in 1833, an abolition that became real on August 1, 1838, after a period of 'apprenticeship' (i.e. continued unpaid labor) for those over six years of age. Emigration of Afro-Caribbean people from Nevis began almost immediately thereafter. Undoubtedly, the fact that, on Nevis, land remained in the hands of the planters, that no reparations were paid to the formerly enslaved (while the 399 slaveowners on Nevis received 151,000 pounds as compensation for their lost 'property' [Richardson 1982:56]), and that there was a lack of other job opportunities were major factors. However, given the exploitation and psychological degradation that were a part of the plantation system, this emigration can also be seen as an act of resistance and an affirmation of freedom of choice. Since the 1840s, emigration has been an important strategy of survival for Nevisians. Richardson thoroughly explores the early (and usually temporary) labor migrations to sugar plantations in Trinidad, British Guiana and Jamaica

and the “admiration and respect” returning migrants received in Nevis. Richardson speculates that “in the small island societies of the British Caribbean, a laboring elite, associated precisely with successful labor migration and return, quite possibly had been formed within a decade after slave emancipation” (1983:19).

The migrations continued: Sugar became less profitable in the late nineteenth century and Nevisians traveled to Venezuela to work in the gold fields of El Callao (Frucht 1967; 1968). This decline of the Nevisian sugar cane industry in the late nineteenth century and the subsequent introduction of sea-island cotton cultivation accelerated soil erosion and nitrogen-depletion; these combined with increasing livestock populations to further degrade the soil and further encourage labor migration. The “pull” of much of the early twentieth century migration was the need for cheap labor for the growth of U.S. capitalism. The building of the Panama Canal drew workers from many Caribbean islands, including Nevis. The building of the dockyards in Bermuda, beginning in 1900, drew even more Nevisians. And U.S. investments in sugar cane in Cuba and the Dominican Republic drew Nevisians and others for their six-month harvest seasons for the first three decades of the century (Richardson 1983:21). After a period of limited opportunities for migration during the world depression of the 1930s, World War II saw Nevisians again traveling to work at the U.S. military bases in Trinidad, British Guiana, and Antigua (149-150). All of these early migrations were mainly male, usually temporary and involved a relative small percentage of the island's population. Nevertheless, these migrations—coupled with the emigration of the old ‘colored’ middle class in the first quarter of the twentieth century and the exodus of the remnants of the white colonials during the Depression—caused significant changes in the class structure on Nevis. They created a new elite of the ‘Special People’ (successful migrants) and their descendants who had purchased land abandoned by the British and had moved into positions left by the permanently emigrating old middle class (Frucht 1967).

The migrations to England during the 1950s and early ‘60s, and the subsequent emigration to work in the developing tourist industry of the U.S. Virgin Islands, however, were distinct from the previous migrations in three ways: the total number taking part was the largest in Nevis's history, a larger percentage of the total was female, and a greater proportion of the émigrés stayed away for decades or permanently. And it affected the population figures and the society of Nevis dramatically. From 1960 to 1991, Nevis's population dropped from 12,770 to 8,794, a loss of 30 percent in just 30 years (*Nevis Statistical...* 2006:9; Richardson 1983:63). During this period, Nevis experienced the highest emigration rate in the Caribbean.³ This emigration of mainly young adults had a

tremendous impact on island society: some villages became peopled by mainly children and grandparents; agriculture's decline accelerated; and many community-based traditions, like Christmas celebrations, disappeared entirely (Frucht 1972; Abrahams 1983). Because women were a significant part of this emigration and because of their greater reliability in sending remittances, this migration also had the effect of strengthening both the position of women in their households and their status in the society (Olgwig 1993a:166; 1993b).

Thus, from the late 1830s to today, migration has been an integral part of Nevisian society. In fact, this unusually old, almost continual, and increasingly extensive tradition has led some scholars to call Nevis a "migration culture." Migration culture "refers to the locally adaptive traits" found in societies in which migration is an integral and accepted element. Richardson identifies such traits as the social and material importance of remittances; a broad definition of 'family,' which is necessarily "an elusive and ever-changing structure and a social adaptation to change and uncertainty" (Richardson 1983:51); an emphasis on those life events—on Nevis, funerals, in particular—which reunite dispersed family members; and economic underspecialization to maximize employment flexibility (23-28). Olgwig, focusing on not only the island's migration tradition, but especially the period since the 1950s which has experienced the most dramatic migration rates, causing "the almost complete reorientation of the Nevisian population to a global community" (1993a:139), adds two additional elements: an even greater orientation toward Western societies and their material culture, an orientation reinforced by the introduction of American cable TV, and a redefinition of the Nevis community not only to include but even to "*center* on Nevisians living and working abroad" (139, 145, emphasis mine). Echoing Richardson's comments on family in migration cultures, Olgwig states that for Nevisians "the notion of family is not based on a residential group of people, but on a network of relatives, who recognize their family ties by giving each other various goods as well as mutual assistance." Migrants abroad are "regarded as members of the household," further reinforcing the reality that the Nevisian community has, in fact, become a "global community" (162).

What is evident from this brief discussion of Nevisian history is that colonization, the exploitation of its land, the two hundred years of the slave system, the growth and demise of the sugar cane industry, and its migration tradition form the foundation of the main societal currents of Nevis today.

The last quarter century has seen significant changes in Nevis, both internally and from the expansion of the country and the people's international interactions. On Nevis itself, the most notable changes

have emanated from the opening of the five-star, Canadian-based Four Seasons Hotel in 1991. Now the largest employer on Nevis, it has also improved business in the small hotels, many of which had opened in the 1950s. Tourism is now the main source of foreign exchange. And its growth and the employment it and related industries provide have been the catalysts in the reversal of Nevis's population depletion. Remarkably, from 1991 to 2001, the population increased from 8,794 to 11,108 (*Nevis Annual...*2004)! Like the late twentieth century emigration, tourism has also strengthened the economic position of women; most Nevisian employees at Four Seasons are women, albeit mainly in low-paid jobs. The presence of more tourists—who are mainly from the U.S., England and Canada—is seen as adding to Nevis's orientation toward Western societies while, paradoxically, stimulating greater display of 'Nevisian' culture to attract tourists.

Less visible, but as important, has been St. Kitts-Nevis's becoming a part of the world community as an independent nation since 1983, especially through its membership in the United Nations. The nation's taking part in the U.N.'s women's conferences which began in 1975, its signing of important conventions (like the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women in 1982), and its membership on key U.N. committees have all been a part of St. Kitts-Nevis's further integration into the world community, including the women's rights community. The federal government's establishment of an Office of Women's Affairs in 1978, Nevis's creation of the Change Centre (an NGO focusing on families, with a particular interest in domestic violence) in 1993, and the nation's 2000 passage of one of the Caribbean's most progressive Domestic Violence Acts are some of the direct results of those international connections.

Although Nevis has been a part of the world system since its conquest in the fifteenth century at the earliest stages of the European imperialist enterprise and although today the decisions of the IMF, the World Bank and the WTO greatly affect the parameters within which the political authorities of St. Kitts-Nevis can operate, there's no question that the nation's greater autonomy since independence has informed its stance toward world organizations, its approach to other nations, and its handling of internal policies. How this historical legacy and these recent dramatic changes have informed Nevisian women's consciousness and current concerns is best revealed in the words of Nevisians themselves.

VOICES OF CONCERN

The following discussion draws on three periods of field research in Nevis: four months in the fall of 1998, two weeks in January 2000,

and two weeks in November 2006. During those periods, I conducted in-depth interviews with forty people (thirty-seven women and three men) and had innumerable informal conversations with women and men about women's issues. Interviewees ranged in age from twenty to seventy eight. Their educational levels range from fourth form (tenth grade) to a few graduate degrees, including the Ph.D. They worked in diverse types of employment from hotel housekeepers to small business owners to schoolteachers to high-level civil servants. Six worked in government jobs or NGOs that focused mainly on women's issues. Of those born and raised in St. Kitts-Nevis, ten had lived and/or studied overseas for periods ranging from two to forty years.⁴ In the following interview excerpts, all respondents are female, unless otherwise noted.

While all of the concerns my interviewees raised related to women, not all were gender specific. Those issues raised as problematic by most or all of my respondents were (in order of frequency mentioned): the low pay of jobs in all sectors; fathers' roles; sexual abuse of children; violence against women; gender discrimination in the private sector; and the social effects of tourism.

Low Pay

From hotel housekeepers to those in high government positions, interviewees all expressed dissatisfaction with the pay, generally, in Nevis and most complained about their own pay. None stated unequivocally that women were paid less than men for the same job, although two said that might exist in the private sector. A thirty-eight-year-old highly-trained civil servant discussed her pay and explained how she thinks people survive on low salaries:

My salary doesn't come close to being fair! I graduated within the top 5% of my class [at a U.S. university] and I know that people who graduated at the bottom 5% are probably making much more than I. But that's the price you pay for tranquility... My salary is less than \$3500 a month [approximately \$1300U.S.]. That's not really paying me what I'm worth... Most of us [Nevisians] don't pay rent and those kinds of things, because most people live at home until they can afford to buy a house. And you don't have a heating bill. Most people don't worry about air conditioning. So, really, the costs...But the pay is still not anywhere close to what Nevisians should be paid.

Respondents' not showing concern about gender inequality in pay does not mean that such inequality doesn't exist. The 2002 recommendation of the U.N. Committee for the Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) that St. Kitts-Nevis adopt legislation guaranteeing "equal pay for work of equal value" suggests

their having found evidence of such inequality ("Report of the Committee..."). What's important for this discussion is that Nevisians are extremely concerned about low pay, but see it as a society wide and not a gender-related problem. This perception explains why there has been little pressure on the St.Kitts-Nevis government to pass legislation—drafted in 2000—on equal pay for work of equal value and on equality in employment.

Fathers' Roles

In an article entitled "The Non-Maintenance of Children – A Sore Issue," which appeared in the March 1999 edition of *The Leeward Times* newspaper, Hensley Daniel wrote:

The non-maintenance of children is widespread...There is an alarmingly high number of delinquent fathers in our society...A number of fathers regard consistent support of their children as burdensome...The welfare of children must be given priority.

Like the issue of low pay, the role of fathers was brought up in some way by all interviewees, including the three men. By far, the lack of financial support to their children was the most common criticism, but also mentioned was fathers' lack of emotional closeness to their children.

Various explanations were offered for fathers' lack of financial support. The most common explanations were men's low income and their having multiple allegiances. A few attributed it to women's growing independence. This forty-two-year-old schoolteacher alluded to all three factors:

I think our men, they can be here, there and there. And, by the time they have to dish out, then they have very little to go around. The cost of living is high. That can be one reason. And, probably, some of our men might think, 'What's going on here? If you are getting out of the house to work, then go ahead with it. And I will withdraw.' Because no longer can they put up their feet and say, "Get me this, get me that.' You know?

While most respondents identified the lack of financial support as the problem, as stated, some emphasized the lack of emotional support, sometimes even disagreeing that men don't financially support their children. For example, a twenty-year-old hotel housekeeper said:

The majority don't fulfill their responsibility. They support their children, you understand, but finding out what the child wants, what the child needs, how the child is doing in school, stuff like that...that kind of relationship, they don't have. They will give the child money, money is all. You need to know what your child is doing, how he stand, what he's all about.

That these are common problems does not necessarily mean that most Nevisian men do not fulfill their financial and emotional responsibilities as fathers. Some research has pointed to a variety of ways males in Caribbean societies contribute to the raising of children, even those not their own (Olwig 1993b:150; Landman *et al.* 1983:49). It should also be mentioned that a few respondents described instances of a lack of closeness to their mothers (that usually resulted from the respondents' having been "fostered out" at a young age) and instances of financial neglect by mothers who'd emigrated. What's important for this discussion is, again, that Nevisians perceived the performances of fathers as a societal problem but not the performances of mothers.

Violence Against Women and Girls

When I asked the Director of the Change Centre what she considered the major problem of women in Nevis, her answer came quickly and adamantly: "Male domination, expressed in domestic violence."

The issue of violence against women and girls came up in the comments of most of the respondents. Respondents brought up the sexual abuse of children (always girls), rape, and domestic violence, in that order of frequency. Since it might be assumed that the hitting of adult women is more common than rape or the sexual abuse of children,⁵ a theme that ran throughout respondents' comments—that is, a profound shame and embarrassment about the existence of domestic violence—may explain why this was the least easily discussed of these three types of violence, despite its probably being the most common.

While the St. Kitts-Nevis Permanent Secretary for Gender Affairs and the Director of the Nevis Change Centre have made violence against women one of their highest priorities, it remains a 'lukewarm' issue on Nevis. In my interviews, there was a reticence about domestic violence against women, even among those respondents who discussed it. These comments were typical:

Plenty women in Nevis hide that. Their husband, their boyfriend, they beat upon them, but they hide it...To me they're either ashamed of people knowing or they're just scared for people to know and talk about them and say 'He does hit she'...Women hide it with makeup. Some of them hide it by staying home. There's different ways of hiding it. (Twenty-year-old hotel housekeeper)

Domestic violence is an issue here. A lot of women keep it quiet, but it's there in a subtle kind of way. Even if they don't beat you, the mental abuse is there...They do have domestic abuse, but they're just hiding it. They don't want anybody to know. 'Well, I'm so well dressed; I'm just sitting here. I don't want anybody to know that he's slapping me, putting me down.' (Fifty-year-old restaurant owner)

However, when I asked interviewees if they personally knew of specific examples, they said no. The two exceptions were a volunteer at the Change Centre, who described her father's violence toward her mother and his children, and the Director of the Change Centre, who, through her work, regularly encountered situations of women being abused and was willing to discuss specific instances. The reasons for not discussing specific examples of domestic violence with me are undoubtedly similar to those that mitigate against Nevisian women's going to the police, filing charges and, even when charges are filed, following through on the charges: there is what Mindie Lazarus-Black has called a "culture of reconciliation" which mitigates against women speaking out about their own and others' abuse. In Nevis and in many other parts of the world, including the U.S., that culture includes "ideas that 'husband-wife business' is 'private business,' that public attention to family quarrels is unsavory, that families should remain stable, that women should turn the other cheek for the sake of the children,...and that every effort should be made to resolve family disputes by reconciliation rather than by formal legal redress" (2007:156). In Nevis, such ideas were promoted through patriarchal British colonial policies and have been maintained through the ideologies of the various denominations of Christianity which still predominate on the island. In such a small society, admitting to having been a victim of abuse means subjecting oneself to gossip ("...they're scared for people...to talk about them..."), means risking appearing less than respectable ("...I'm so well dressed...I don't want anybody to know he's slapping me..."), means acknowledging a shame that will be felt all the more keenly when reflected in the "looking glass" of others' eyes (Cooley [1902] 1983). By my interviewees' not describing any specific instances, they distanced themselves from domestic violence and protected their peers who were victims from the public discourse in the same way they had described the victims protecting themselves.

Far more interviewees spoke in detail about child sexual abuse, giving specific examples. The Director of the Change Centre made the unexpected statement that...

Child sexual abuse is very prevalent. *Physical abuse is*—the rate is high, but it's *not as prevalent as sexual abuse*...[That] is becoming part of our culture. Traditionally, yes, we have had some cases of incest. We have had some cases where...father-daughter, uncle, brother. We have had some cases where 'my father is my grandfather.' That sort of thing. But now, we find that a number of women are leaving home in the evenings to work in the hospitality industry. They work in hotels; they work at restaurants during the night. They have small children that they leave at home...There's a boyfriend who's supposed to be protective...(Emphasis mine)

Others agreed:

Another thing that is there and covered up is still child abuse. What's it called? Incest....Again, that is something that is not spoken about. Women don't molest; it's mainly the males. (Fifty-year-old restaurant owner)

Like all of the respondents who discussed the sexual abuse of children, this restaurant owner contended that it happens with only adult males and female children.

It's impossible to know if it's increasing in Nevis, as the Director of the Change Centre contends, or if it's becoming more publicly known. A civil service consultant in her sixties suggests the latter:

I know we have quite a bit of incest on the island. Father-daughter exists but, mainly, it's mother's boyfriend-daughter. A lot of that. It's been there for decades. It's always been there. Even when I went to school, you'd hear—even in the lower grades, you know—'Don't talk to her. She can't be your friend because her daddy is her grandfather.' At that time, there were no charges brought.

It's certainly coming to the attention of agencies and the court system in larger numbers than in the past. In addition, the very existence of agencies that address and publicly discuss such issues—the St. Kitts-Nevis Ministry of Gender Affairs, the new Nevis Department of Gender & Social Affairs (in Nevis's Ministry of Health, Gender & Social Affairs, Trade, Industry and Commerce), the Nevis Change Centre—undoubtedly promotes awareness and increases the public's willingness to seek redress. It's clear, however, that attitudes have not yet reached a point satisfactory to advocates for women. Charges are still rarely brought against abusers and, even when filed, convictions are rare. Why the problem getting convictions? The male former Director of Community Affairs explained in 2000:

I have not seen convictions [of molesters of] minors. And that worries me!... I have seen women who have gone to court and defended stoutly the men [who molested]...The law makes it very clear: if you get a minor pregnant, there is a [minimum] sentence...But there has never been a man in this country, going before the court of this land, suffering for raping anybody's daughter... You see, if the society's lukewarm on the matter, a lot of it will happen. There has not been a parent who has gone to the courts and said 'whoever breeds my daughter will pay.' They have not gone.

Again and again, I was told that the mothers and the abused girls themselves were the main obstacles to punishing abusers. Sometimes the abused girl does not tell anyone what was happening to her. The Director of the Change Centre explained this:

[Y]ou'll find that these [male] relatives, including fathers as well, they have financially bound these children: 'I will give you a Nike outfit'... One child told me that the father said that this is how family is supposed to love them. And the children are told not to say anything to the mother because the mother will be jealous.

More often, it's the mothers who hide it, sometimes to protect their reputation as a mother:

Because you're a woman, you don't want your name to be associated with that because it's a stigma...Somebody might think...the mother was careless with leaving the child there with [the] boyfriend...In our society we have not learned to speak about these things. (Fifty-year-old restaurant owner)

Or mothers might have financial concerns and/or self esteem issues:

We can't do anything unless the children are willing to admit and give evidence. And that's where we're having our problem. Children are not giving evidence. They're barred from doing this by their mothers and the neighbors and the society. There are a number of reasons. One, [the mothers] are dependent economically. Two, there is the [issue of] esteem. It drags her self esteem. It tells society that she's inadequate to satisfy this man sexually and so he has to turn to her daughter...And then, she reasons that, if he goes to prison, there's no one to look to, to take care of the family. And the children will grow up one day to blame her for sending their father to jail. And so the mothers discourage the girls. (Director of the Change Centre)

Even in cases where the abuser is outside the family and the mother and child are willing to speak out, their economic situation may play a role. A male employee of the Nevis Historical and Conservation Society (NHCS) described another common scenario and, in his description, revealed a gender and class bias that is undoubtedly representative of a segment of the Nevisian population and is part of the very problem he described:

There was a female judge...who got very angry because the young ladies will be paid to say 'well, nothing is wrong.' And 'there isn't anything like that.' They'd be paid by the person they'd accused or [his] family paid them off. Or if one thirteen-year-old get pregnant, they quickly book a flight and send them to St. Martin where they live for the next ten months and get the baby and then come back, or something like that. So they're outside the thing. But we do have [sexual abuse of minors]. But the thing is that when it happens to *your* brother, you know...When it comes down to *my* brother, because I'm a person of influence in the society, I'd find some way of putting together a package and have [the girl] go to Tortola and have the child. Because it's a jurisdictional thing...

Thus, while the sexual abuse of girls is passionately condemned and publicly criticized by women's advocates, the progress of their work to eliminate it is still undermined by the shame and financial concerns of some Nevisian women⁶ and the profound sexism (often exacerbated by classism) of some Nevisian men.

Of the various types of violence against women, rape of adult women was brought up spontaneously only during my second research trip to Nevis in January 2000. In every case, respondents mentioned a well-publicized trial for rape that had taken place the previous November. I include a discussion of rape here because it's a form of violence against women that takes place in Nevis, but with the caveat that, before the November '99 trial and by the time of my 2006 visit, it was apparently not of major concern as a societal issue to any of my respondents, including those who were professional women's advocates.

Exploring that '99 case in depth reveals much about attitudes toward women and class dynamics in Nevisian society.

This happened some time last year. Some girl was at a function, a social party. And she asked the young man for a ride home. So he consented. And while they were on their way there, I guess they conversed normal. But then she noticed that he was passing where she was living. And she said, 'You're supposed to turn off.' He said 'No,' and he raped her. (Forty-two-year-old teacher, 2000)

Soon after the rape, the young woman went to the Director of the Change Centre for help. The Director told me how she was later criticized for helping and for supposedly contributing to the man's loss of his job and his conviction.

A woman said to me—who I consider a friend, too—she said, 'Oh, you've done a lot. You've done enough. You've done enough. It's time for you to stop.' I said, 'What have I done? I haven't done anything. The girl came to me. I sent her to the doctor. I counseled her. There was absolutely nothing else that I did upon that case.' But I'm supposed to be the one who allowed him to lose his job, and allowed him to...I'm the one. And so she said, 'Y'all did enough, so let up now. Let up now. I hope you're satisfied with what you've done to him...I hope you have a job for him.' I mean that was in my face! And this from a friend. Another [male] friend said, 'Remember that you have sons.' And all the people who live in my house are men. And I asked him if that was meant to intimidate me.

Why such a reaction, even after the evidence became public and the jury rendered the unusual and unexpected guilty verdict? The Director continued:

And it's simply because of the fact that the guy is well known...and the girl is totally invisible. Nobody, *nobody* is sympathetic with the girl

because in our society...I don't know if I should say this, but people say, 'What is a piece of wife?' That's how they refer to her. 'So what is that? So who is that? That something? He wasn't the first one. She wasn't a virgin. So what?' This is our society. And it's very painful...If it were a certain person's daughter, it would be different. If it was Mr. So and So's daughter.

After the conviction, the judge levied the sentence: no prison time and a \$5000 fine (approximately \$1850U.S.).

My informal conversations with Nevisians about this rape support the Director's contention that few sympathized with the victim. A hotel housekeeper said she disagreed with his being convicted because she'd heard the young woman had been intimate with him before. And, revealing how class and respectability are conflated, a waitress said she thought his receiving only a fine was "fair" because he was a "respectable person."

My final interview in 2006 was with the new Director of the Gender & Social Affairs Department of the newly elected administration. Because no previous interviewee had brought up rape as an issue during this visit, I noted that fact to her, mentioning the widespread interest during my 2000 visit. She didn't find this decline in interest surprising, and explained it this way:

There's no outrage about rape in Nevis. There's no outrage about anything! I think we're sort of passive. People get outraged when there's an incident. But they don't translate that outrage into doing something about it to prevent further incidents...So we get that outrage in response to a particular case, but then...[snaps her fingers]

She then gave the details of "a particular case" in 2005 that seemed to have already left the collective memory of Nevisians by 2006.

There was one rape last year. There was an older guy and a fourteen-year-old schoolgirl. I'm trying to remember his sentence. It was five years, then deportation. He's now in jail. He's Guyanese, so he'll be deported after he serves his sentence. When I think about that case, the girl's parents are sort of middle class. The father is a guidance counselor; the mother is a nurse... These are people who would really push to make sure this guy pays for what he did. I think [the conviction] has a lot to do with that.

Again, the salience of class to the resolution of a rape case was emphasized. My interviews and conversations about these rapes underscore the undervaluing of women and women's bodies, and the critical importance of class. The reactions I encountered in 2000 left me inclined to agree with the observation the male former Director of Community Affairs made at the time:

In Nevis, I am not sure that there is enough of a revulsion to rape. I'm not sure... Some people say this conviction marks a turning point. I'm not sure that I agree that it is.

That the issue of rape had left the consciousnesses of most Nevisians by 2006 confirms that the highly-publicized '99 case was, indeed, not a turning point in the attitudes of Nevisians about the crime of rape. On the contrary, my research supports the contention of the new Director of Gender & Social Affairs that there is, indeed, "no outrage about rape in Nevis."

Any discussion of violence against women (and rape is considered an act of violence) would be incomplete without mention of the physical punishment of children, because of the documented connection between the two. Yet, only one of my respondents brought up the physical punishment of children as problematic,⁷ and comments by interviewees made it clear that corporal punishment of children has been and still is today the norm in Nevis. Indeed, most of my respondents reported having been hit at home and at school as children, and most had "spanked" their own children and approved of their children's receiving corporal punishment at school. The statement, "It's part of our culture," was repeated as an explanation and defense. Two interviewees expanded on this statement, explaining the origins of the practice:

Well, you know, due to cultural norms and the legacy of slavery, beating children was commonplace. Teachers just did not think of an alternative. (Civil service consultant)

Remember, the corporal punishment we have here in the Caribbean came out of the British system. In order to learn, you had to be beat. And you were beaten! (Secondary school teacher)

As stated, when most of my interviewees were children, they were punished physically at home. Class was not a factor; the children in educated families were as likely to be hit as the children of the less privileged. The (now fifty-year-old) daughter of a Nevisian family that has been prominent and affluent for generations said:

My mother ruled with an iron fist. I swear, I thought my mom was trained in some army somewhere! [Laughs]...And we had *whippings*... I was not raised with communicative parents, believe it or not. Back then, you got a spanking before... Sometimes you didn't even know why you were getting a beating!

Despite Nevis's improved standard of living, practices appear to be the same today. This educator described what she hears on her walks:

I hear it. Even infants! This is powerful. Yes, there are beautiful cars on the road [now], beautiful houses. But when I walk sometimes in the morning, I can hear a mother [in her house] saying to her child, 'Take

your blankety, blankety blank self off of the bed and get dressed!' You know? Then you hear a piece of board against the child's back. And you think to yourself, 'Why did you have him?'

The interviewees, some of whom seemed critical of having been hit as children, almost all reported having hit their own children and all approved of teachers being allowed to hit children. Surprisingly, even the few who had not been physically punished at home had all been hit at school, *with* their parents' approval.

The issue of corporal punishment in the schools, while not raised as a problem during my 1998 and 2000 interviews, came up repeatedly in the 2006 interviews. This is because the policy was changing. The 2005 Education Act placed limitations on the use of corporal punishment. (For example, only the principal or his/her designee can now administer it, the strap used is limited in length and thickness, and each incident must be documented.) Because the new Nevis administration, elected in July 2006, strongly supports this Act, they have held community meetings and assigned Education Department administrators to work with teachers to help them change their approach to discipline. This teacher, however, was not unusual in objecting to some of these limitations:

Corporal punishment is still allowed in the public school system. It's the principal who inflicts it. I would like to think that not only the principal should be allowed to administer corporal punishment. I would like to see... the deputy or one or two of the senior teachers [be able to administer it]. Because I've been at [this] Secondary School for some time now, and you find that corporal punishment has its purpose in everyday life. But the children tend to feel like its only the principal who could administer that. And so it's only the principal that will have that sort of respect. So I would like to see it, you know, filtered out. Not too far down, because we can't just use it loosely with those that are just coming in and the inexperienced ones. But I think corporal punishment has its place in the schools today.

More than one interviewee said that the new Education Act was seen by many in Nevis as "very North American" because of its emphasis on students' rights and teachers' accountability. And becoming North American is negative to Nevisians, not only because they believe an alien culture should not be imposed on Nevis but also because they attribute the violence in the United States partially to lenient child-rearing practices and the lack of corporal punishment in schools.

We're getting funding from the IMF and the World Bank. And part of that funding is that we'll put into place certain non-discriminatory laws. You know, everybody has a right to come to school. People with locks, they must be able to come to school. And the backlash is that it's American culture being imposed. They say, 'Well, look at America!

They stop beating the kids and look at them! They have Columbine and stuff like that. We won't tolerate no Columbine. Them children need *licks*! You know, there *is* a reaction here; there *is* resistance. (Secondary school teacher)

While the Act does provide for the Minister of Education to remove all corporal punishment at any time, I encountered no advocate for eliminating corporal punishment entirely. As an Education Department administrator acknowledged, even implementing the policies placing limitations on the use of corporal punishment in schools "will be very, very, very difficult."

Thus, in most homes and most schools in Nevis, children are punished physically. No Nevisian interviewee articulated a position similar to that of Trinidadian writer Merle Hodge:

[A] feature of Caribbean family life that needs to be addressed is the use of verbal and physical violence as normal, everyday, accepted methods of childrearing. (2002: 483)

Because some research demonstrates a connection between the physical punishment of children and their later becoming violent and/or accepting of violence as adults⁸ and since Nevisians are increasingly concerned about violence against women and girls, it may be assumed that, at some point in the future, Nevisians will re-consider the taken-for-granted cultural pattern of physical punishment in homes and the little contested norm of corporal punishment in schools.

Gender Discrimination in Employment

Less frequently raised as problematic than forms of violence against women and girls was the issue of gender discrimination in the workplace. Of those who discussed it, most felt it was more prevalent in the private sector than in the public sector. Unquestionably, the interviewee who exhibited the most concern and animation about this issue was the (Kittitian-born, Canadian-educated) Permanent Secretary of Gender Affairs:

Well, our Constitution says that you cannot be discriminated against because of sex...Is there going to be a woman who's tough enough to [file a complaint]? No.... I think there are positions that women just don't get. I think [gender] is taken into consideration. You know, women get pregnant. Women have to leave because the kids are sick, etc. And I think somehow there's still that whole idea of men being more noteworthy of the position, you know... [St. Kitts and Nevis] became members of the ILO [International Labor Organization] in 1995, which is good. But we have not yet ratified any of the ILO conventions. I'm hoping that we look at two of them: One is workers with family responsibili-

ties and the other is equal pay for work of equal value. I think within government...there really isn't an issue of unfairness based much on gender.⁹ In the private sector, I don't agree. In the private sector, there needs to be some regulations and some looking at.

Some interviewees questioned the employment practices in foreign-owned hotels, although discrimination based on nation of origin was cited more often than gender. I was repeatedly told that these hotels preferred to bring people from overseas Western countries for the upper level management positions, even though there were Nevisians with equivalent training and experience. (This belief is supported by the fact that, in 2006, there was only one Nevisian general manager in the nine foreign-owned hotels in Nevis.) The issue of differential pay systems in these hotels also came up repeatedly. Some said that foreign employees were paid more than Nevisians for the same job; most often, I was told that the pay was equal, but foreign employees were given travel allowances, stipends for living expenses, and other financial supplements that Nevisians were not given. What's important is the pervasiveness of beliefs that, in foreign-owned hotels, some kind of inequality exists based on nationality and, as this teacher and a few others speculated, possibly on gender.

I think that at Four Seasons, for instance, I think that men are paid better. I have a feeling like the men are paid better than the women. I don't know if it's because of what the jobs entail, that men just get the better jobs. That can very well be, you know.

It's revealing that job discrimination was not raised as one of the major concerns by interviewees, that the only interviewee creating programs that directly address gender discrimination in the workplace was the Permanent Secretary of Gender Affairs (based in and creating programs for St. Kitts), that this issue never came up in my interviews with women working at the Change Centre (the most progressive NGO on Nevis dealing with women's issues) and that, when, in 2000, I asked the Nevis Assistant Secretary of Women's Affairs about gender discrimination in employment, her answer—in which her position changed as she spoke—suggested she hadn't given the topic much thought:

There's not really gender discrimination. I find that women choose to go into certain jobs...Women don't aspire to do [manual labor]. They tend to feel they must be this dainty person. OK?...Even in the banks, women have substituted as managers for a while. The Bank of Scotia had one for an interim period. That's basically it. Women usually reach assistant manager, but I've never seen one who...Let's face it: there's a feeling that women can't handle some responsibilities, things like that, you know 'Business? A woman?' It *is* discrimination. And the board of directors, they're all male, normally. Even though the women, some

of them, are qualified for the job, they're not offered the job. There is discrimination; That's it. And you could see the gender bias.

Although a glaring issue in both St. Kitts and Nevis,¹⁰ only three respondents brought up the lack of women in politics. One was the St. Kitts-Nevis Permanent Secretary of Gender Affairs. In her position on the Committee for CEDAW, she was aware that this was one of the areas the Committee identified as being in need of attention in the nation. In Nevis, two 2006 interviewees also mentioned this as a problem. The first response of a civil servant to my question about what she considered the major issues facing Nevisian women was:

Women's lack of involvement in politics and lack of involvement in leadership positions. I think it's because it's been a male-dominated society for too long. I think also that women have been subservient and it's only now that they're going away, getting educated, and coming back with degrees, and are beginning to rise...In the early days, men left. Some went to England; some went to Santo Domingo. And I can remember the anxiety of wives and girlfriends, because each man had five or six people he was supporting...So, therefore, I think it's a hangover from that reliance on men. And men had to have the superior roles...It was a male-dominated society, even though it was a matriarchal society. It was still male-dominated! And you looked up to the *man*.

Her perceptive analysis highlights the importance of the past male-dominated labor migrations in maintaining women's financial dependence and the changes brought about by recent women's migrations for work and education. And a secondary schoolteacher's comments on the lack of women in politics complements this analysis by highlighting the constraints created by ideology, specifically, conceptualizations of appropriate 'feminine' behavior and attitudes toward homosexuality.

The politics issue—it's not a 'done' thing [for women]. It's not seen to be feminine to go into politics. You know, 'Who she think she playin' at? She in a man business!' They don't like the idea of female politicians. Even women! They're the first to say something. A strong black woman is seen to be 'mantana,' which is the local term for lesbian. And being a lesbian is something that's definitely reprehensible here...It's a very homophobic community.

Supporting the civil servant's observation about the importance of women's recent migrations is the noteworthy fact that all three of these women who identified the lack of women in politics as a problem had lived and studied overseas for lengthy periods of time (the shortest was eighteen years), in Canada, the United States, and England, respectively.

Overall, Nevisian interviewees' comments about gender discrimination in employment (as well as their lack of comments) suggest there

is little public inclination to bring it to the forefront of the discussions about women's issues and/or to create programs that would aggressively address the discrimination that some interviewees acknowledged does exist.

Unlike discrimination, there is no legislation against sexual harassment per se and very few of my interviewees raised it as a concern. Of the three respondents who brought up sexual harassment themselves, two were professional women's advocates and the third was a schoolteacher who'd lived in New York for much of her adult life.

The Permanent Secretary for Gender Affairs for St. Kitts-Nevis showed keen awareness of this issue, even though...

...the Labour Department deals more with that. There are no sexual harassment laws, but we use the whole idea of the Employment Act and the whole issue of providing safe working environments, that kind of approach. Because if you're being sexually harassed, the environment is not safe.

The Director of Nevis's Change Centre offered an insightful explanation of why sexual harassment is tolerated by women, an explanation which again showed the importance of class in Nevis and how women's lack of choices is the root of their having to tolerate both domestic violence and such on-the-job harassment:

In the workplace, there's a lot of sexual harassment that has not yet been defined in our society. Even though women have recourse and even though they are aware that this is happening, it is tolerated because, one, the status of these men and, two, these women need to hold their jobs...*Sexual harassment and domestic violence, they walk hand in hand here.* Women have had to tolerate it to hold a job simply because they know that there is not the scope for them to leave one job and take up another, not immediately. The jobs are filled...Sexual harassment takes place at every level. Every level. (Emphasis mine.)

The response of a civil servant (in 2006), whose department focused on women's issues, to my question about whether there was workplace sexual harassment in Nevis was revealing. Otherwise talkative and well-informed, she slowly answered, "Some. I can't speak too much about that,"...and was silent.

It's not surprising that sexual harassment legislation, drafted in 2000, has languished in the St. Kitts-Nevis Department of Labour without that department's or the public support needed for passage. Perceived as problematic by only a few women's advocates, it appears that workplace sexual harassment is still to be named and acknowledged by the larger Nevisian society.

Education of Pregnant Adolescents

One additional issue merits attention: Nevis's practice of the permanent expulsion from school of pregnant teens. While only two interviewees raised it as a problem in 1998 and 2000, it was obviously a problem even then, not only because of the yearly subset of adolescent girls being denied education but also because of its contradicting the policies of the government of the federation. The St. Kitts-Nevis Permanent Secretary for Gender Affairs explained:

The Education Act is a federal act. The federal cabinet passed the policy. When the Convention on the Rights of the Child was signed, it was signed on behalf of the federation. When the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination was signed, it was signed for the federation. Yet, because of the Nevis administration, they have taken a different approach—which is strange, which is wrong, which is illegal, which is discriminatory, which is unjustified, which is all of those things you can think of, any adjective you can think of to describe it. End of the day? It is *wrong*...I'm sorry that Nevis is lagging behind. Very much so.¹¹

On Nevis itself, all of the people I talked with in 1998 and 2000 (except one), in both formal interviews and informal conversations, opposed allowing pregnant teens to stay in school or return to school after the birth. Interestingly, the one Nevisian I spoke with who unequivocally thought it wrong to put pregnant teens out of school and not provide education for them after the birth was the *male* former Director of Community Affairs. And he was adamant in his position:

The school system keeps [pregnant teens] out of school because we are still in the colonial mode. The teachers have supported this policy. Those teachers are 'Christians.' Those teachers are *women*. The people who are making decisions about those [girls] are women. That's important: it's not men who are saying, 'You must not go back to school.' It's not the men who are saying so...

And when I worked at Community Affairs, we were saying that we will provide education and opportunities for them *outside* of the school system. And we got slapped on the wrist for that.

There is a high rate of recidivism. The girls do go back and do the same thing again. So once we don't take control over them after the first pregnancy, they get two. And when they get a second child, it tends to say to the establishment, 'You see what's happening?', not recognizing that it's because you left them out in the weather....

So there's a different moral space; there's a moral space. The old moral approach—moralistic lockdown approach, down and shoot

approach—is say ‘no!’ The church has historically played a very big role in our society. Part of the argument is that these girls are immoral. They paint an immoral brush for various people. The fear is—and it’s the same argument for capital punishment—‘If you let go, you open the floodgates. Every year you’re gonna have more. And we gonna have a school full of [students’] children.’ That’s another argument.

The unusual political arrangement of Nevis’s having a separate governmental structure and some autonomy led to this situation of the two islands of this federated nation having contradictory policies. However, it was clear that the illegality of Nevis’s policy, its inconsistency with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child,¹² the pressures that would inevitably be brought to bear by the relevant U.N. committee (CEDAW), and the continuing desire of young mothers to continue their education pointed to Nevis’s having to change its policy of educational disenfranchisement of some young women in the near future. The July 2006 election of a new island administration, of the Nevis Reform Party, began that change.

In the fall of 2006, this new administration announced that Nevis’s policy would become consistent with that of the federation’s government and that they were exploring various plans for providing education for adolescent girls who were pregnant or mothers. Despite this public announcement, no 2006 interviewee spontaneously brought up the existing practice as a problem. However, when I mentioned this change in policy, the responses varied from pragmatic to quite measured support for the impending change. Most, like this businesswoman, theoretically supported educating pregnant teens, but questioned elements of the actual implementation of the policy:

I feel that pregnant teens should be given the opportunity to continue their education, but I feel that programs must be put in place. I don’t think you can take a pregnant teen and just throw her back in the classroom—or, maybe, four or five of them—and not have to deal with the possibility that they may be disruptive. OK?

And more significant—because of her position in the Education Department which required she be part of the planning and implementation of the new policy—this civil servant’s response indicated that her support for educating pregnant teens was coupled with an uneasiness with the idea of teen motherhood:

A girl has a child. The child is not responsible. If the girl doesn’t get an education and is able to go out to work, it means that—well, the practice on this island is that she’ll continue to have children. You get with a man so you can support [your child]; he gives you another one and then he leaves. And it goes on. So getting an education will break

that. However, you cannot just say pregnant girls can go back to school. Yes, pregnant children return to school, *but* they choose one high school. They have a day care or a nursery. And, on that campus, the girls return to school and drop their babies off. They are not allowed to speak about the children. They're not allowed to show pictures. And they cannot take their baby into the classroom.

The strength of her commitment to the education of pregnant teens is, perhaps, revealed by her response to my subsequent question, "Were you advocating for education for pregnant teens last year [when the previous administration was still in power]?"

Prior to this, no. Because, what had happened, I realized that [not providing them with education] was the practice of the then administration.

The 2006 interviews suggest there is still tepid popular support on Nevis for educating pregnant teens and teens who are mothers. It's not insignificant, however, that the one Nevisian who argued adamantly for it in 2000—the former Director of Community Affairs—became, after the 2006 election, the Minister of Health, Gender & Social Affairs, Trade, Industry and Commerce. Because of his becoming the most powerful person on Nevis on all gender-related programs and because of the strong support from the government of the federation, there's no question that education will be provided in the near future for adolescent girls who are pregnant or mothers and that Nevis's tradition of permanently expelling pregnant girls from school—though never defined as problematic by most Nevisians—is, nevertheless, in the process of changing.

Tourism

As previously stated, Nevis tourism began in the 1950s with the restoration and transformation of a number of old plantation houses into hotels. However, the opening of Four Seasons in 1991 raised the industry to a new level. The final concern raised by respondents was the negative social effects of Nevis's growing tourism industry. While acknowledging the economic benefits of Nevis's tourism—providing jobs and foreign exchange—they also identified problematic effects: tourists' behavior, some social ramifications of Nevisian women's greater employment, and changes in traditional Nevisian lifestyles and values.

Respondents identified smoking, use of drugs, immodesty in dress, sexually predatory activities, and treatment of Nevisians as the unwelcome behavior of tourists.

They bring certain habits. Like some places, they're smoking. I don't know if you've noticed but, in Nevis, most people don't smoke. But locals tend to imitate the tourists. Whatever they see, whatever they

wear in New York, the guys start wearing. (Thirty-nine-year-old civil servant)

The drugs come in to supply the tourists, but also a lot of our young men have gotten into it as well. (Civil service consultant)

A couple of years ago, I was at the beach and a tourist boat was in at that moment. And some of the tourists came off the boat...And one lady came off with nothing up here [gesturing toward her chest]. Nothing up here, you know? And I don't think that's right. I don't like those kind of things. 'Cause children... They don't supposed to dress like that. Some of them walk into Charlestown with just their bathing suit on. OK, we don't do that here! (Thirty-eight-year-old bakery owner)

With more concern, they described uneasily and sometimes obliquely, a sexual predator element among tourists. In 1998, a male employee of the NHCS said:

We have a population of 9000 and we get 60,000 tourists a year. We see a lot of flirtatious activities [between tourists and locals] on our beaches. We see women [tourists] come and they cohabit with the guys working in the hotels. And they came with their husbands!...They're coming with their husbands, getting them drunk, sending them back to his room, and having the whole night to... All these activities. I mean, what is that saying? It is said that there is now, that young women from the Dominican Republic are here. And they have little homes where people go and pay. But, you know, that is something that has always been in society, but was unspeakable. And not many people knew about it, especially if you're not interested. But now, even if you're not interested in it, it is a known fact, this gigolo type of activity in the tourist industry.

A number of interviewees brought up the two new houses of prostitution, confirming that their existence is common knowledge in Nevis. All said the prostitutes were "foreign," "Spanish" women. However, a secondary school teacher explained how most of these women are, in fact, historically connected to Nevis, through one of its many waves of migration:

In the 1930s, there was a huge wave of people from Nevis who went to live in Santo Domingo, in the Dominican Republic. They went there to work in the sugar cane fields. And I think they were opening up—what was it?—Operation Bootstrap. They were opening up a lot of factories and stuff like that. So a lot of Kittitians and Nevisians went. So [these women] have *roots* here. So they come back. And you find a lot of them come back with Nevisian names. Now that there's a downturn in the economy [in the Dominican Republic], they come to Nevis where there's an opportunity. But they have Nevisian roots; they're the children of Nevisian fathers.

The fact that the issue of prostitution came up more frequently in 2006 than in prior visits indicates that the phenomenon is growing and/or its existence is becoming more widely known and discussed. As research indicates, as tourism increases on Nevis, it is predictable that prostitution too, if unchecked, will continue to grow.¹³

And, finally, a few interviewees commented on how some tourists treat Nevisians:

Some tourists want to take pictures without asking. Disrespectful. Some are prejudiced. They don't want to talk to us. Maybe they say they are white and we are black. (Thirty-year-old hotel housekeeper)

When you meet one or two bad ones who—like you say, 'Hi' and they just turn their face on you—that make you start thinking: 'Man, should I be doing this? Bowing to make a living?' That's the kind of way they make you feel. Like they're better than you are. (Twenty-six-year-old male hotel cook)

In addition to problems with the behavior of tourists, respondents identified what they considered negative cultural impacts resulting from the greater employment of women. Most frequently mentioned was the effect on childraising. Recall that the Director of the Change Centre attributed increased child sexual abuse to women's increasing employment. Others saw even more widespread problems, like neglected children:

I find now a lot of ...women are out working. We find we have two parents working. You making the money. But who suffers? The kids! They should be home doing their homework, be home with a grandmother... But what are they doing? Watching TV. That's a negative. That's a negative that's creeping in. People are becoming more materialistic. And so they're going after that and the kids are suffering... I said people who work at Four Season have more money, right? So it has changed them. Everyone wants a car now 'cause they can afford to pay for a car. Everyone wants a house now because they can afford it...They're more materialistic. (Fifty-year-old restaurant owner)

This respondent was not unusual in seeing an interconnection between less monitoring of children (because of parents' working in tourism), more TV watching (Nevisian cable is from the U.S.), and increasing materialism. Nor was it unusual to hear comments on some of the negative aspects of the work, like the cultural disconnect between the hotel managers and the employees...

The managers are outsiders [who] don't bother to learn the culture... The way they treat people! [They] don't *want* to know about the culture! This creates conflict with Nevisian employees. (Former hotel employee)

...and the difficulties of night shifts:

Nevisian women have been struggling with dependence because they weren't independent women [in the past], in terms of having their own money and all that. Now, they're struggling with being a mother and a career woman, having a working world and very challenging hours. I know one mother, in particular. Her husband died; she's a single mother. And when the shift changes, if she works until 11:00, 11:30, she doesn't get home until two o'clock in the morning 'cause she doesn't have a car. So the hotel van picks them up and goes around the island, dropping them off. So, by the time you've made all the stops, about 1:30, quarter to two, she's just getting dropped off at her home. So, it's challenging. (Fifty-year-old businesswoman)

And a communications employee identified an even broader cultural impact: "We are becoming a nation of servants. And that's a *very* negative thing."

Even those who expressed these criticisms, however, acknowledged some social benefits of Nevis's tourism industry. Most often mentioned was that employment opportunities had increased women's independence:

No longer I see our women sitting around the house and waiting for their menfolk to be the breadwinners. Nowadays, you will find many women have two jobs. That helps them economically, but I think it does a lot for them on the social side, too. It makes them feel that they are somebody, more than just sitting there waiting for handouts from men. (Director of Tourism, 2000)

And more than one respondent saw that greater employment opportunities on Nevis also meant less need for labor emigration and, in that way, contributed to more family stability. For example, the forty-one-year-old Assistant Secretary for Women's Affairs in Nevis said:

It has benefited...because we have a lot more of our people staying home, a lot of migration has been cut...People were just leaving, leaving, leaving... Because of tourism and the job it brings, a lot of people that would go to St. Martin to be, like, a maid will stay here and be a maid. Make more money than being in St. Martin. So it brings stability in terms of population, in terms of parents. People with little children don't go abroad. So it helped stability, in that sense.

Thus, respondents clearly appreciated the jobs tourism had made available, while having ambivalence about some of the social effects of those jobs. It's noteworthy that more reservations were expressed during my last (2006) visit to Nevis than in the prior two. Undoubtedly, this is related to the growth of the industry during this period and to the well-publicized plans for another large hotel near Four Seasons, plans that were criticized by the challenging party during the political

campaign prior to the July 2006 election.¹⁴ This discussion brought the debate about the costs and benefits of tourism into the public discourse. And, finally, since the growing permanent 'ex-pat' population was often brought up in discussions of tourism, Nevisians' ambivalent attitudes toward this 'spin-off' of tourism may be informing their views of tourism itself. In any case, my interviews indicate that Nevisians do have increasing reservations about tourism, but these reservations are still a weak counterpoint to their appreciation of its benefits.

The voices of these Nevisian women and men reflect what is perceived by Nevisians as the salient issues facing Nevisian women today. Some of the concerns—like the social impact of tourism—are fairly new to Nevis. Most, however,—like domestic violence, gender discrimination in employment and incest—have been present in society, disapproved of, but not openly discussed or publicly addressed until the last few decades. What has contributed to this recent shift in consciousness and willingness to confront these issues?

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO CHANGE

The increasing awareness of and activism on gender inequities in Nevis emanates from, I contend, the convergence of four interacting factors: the strengthened position of women because of the labor migration that began in the late 1950s; St. Kitts-Nevis's interactions in the international community, especially the U.N.; the improved economy on Nevis and its impact on local women as well as Nevisian women in the diaspora; and the experiential backgrounds of Nevisian women themselves. (While women's organizations, especially within churches, have existed on Nevis for decades, they were mainly of the social welfare type, focusing on "training in home-making skills, childcare, health and nutrition, and the care of the sick and elderly" [Ellis 2003:70]. These organizations, however, deserve immense credit for laying the foundation for the development of more progressive women's organizations that have developed in the last quarter century.)

As discussed in the historical section, the emigration that began in the 1950s included more women than previous migrations, in terms of both rate and absolute numbers. Because of their participation and women's tendency to send more remittances than men, this emigration had the effect of elevating women's status within their families and their communities. It also created a population of women earning independent incomes. The earning capability of these women—even if doing factory or domestic work overseas—enhanced their sense of self and modeled capable womanhood as they provided for their families in Nevis and their families begun overseas.

Also discussed in the historical section, St. Kitts-Nevis has signed a number of international conventions directly related to women's issues, most notably, the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (signed in 1982); the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1993); and the Inter-American Convention for the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women (1995). The signing of conventions such as these has laid the legal foundation for the government to address many forms of gender injustice. The St. Kitts-Nevis Department of Gender Affairs is pushing for the nation to sign even more progressive international legal instruments, like the International Labor Organization's convention on workers with family responsibilities and the optional protocol to CEDAW which would allow "women or groups of women who have exhausted local means of human right redress to file complaints directly to the CEDAW committee" ("Women's Issues..." 2004).

As critical as its signing on to international agreements has been the nation's taking part in the U.N.'s women's conferences, including Beijing in 1995, and its involvement with the Committee for CEDAW. Taking part in the conferences necessitates self-assessment and the submission of a report on the status of women in the nation. (The excellent "St. Christopher and Nevis National Report for the Fourth World Conference on Women," prepared by the Interministerial Council on Women in 1995, is an example of the research and reflection mandated by that process.) The election of the St. Kitts-Nevis Permanent Secretary for Gender Affairs to the position of Caribbean representative on the Committee for CEDAW from 1999 to 2002 reinforced the nation's leadership in this area. Her role as a member of this Committee, which assesses all member countries' progress on women,¹⁵ not only gave her particular insight into the main issues for women worldwide, but put additional pressure on St. Kitts-Nevis to live up to the highest international standards. (It's not coincidental, for example, that St. Kitts-Nevis's Domestic Violence Act is one of the most progressive in the Eastern Caribbean, in that it recognizes emotional abuse, as well as physical, as a form of violence.) Other scholars (e.g., Boyle and Preves 2000; Merry 2006), looking at the process by which programs and legislation for women have developed throughout the world since the 1970s, also identify the critical influence of international ideals on the formation of national policies.¹⁶ The importance of St. Kitts-Nevis's ongoing discussions about women's issues within international organizations cannot be overstated.

Since 1991, the improvement of Nevis's economy because of tourism and related industries has provided employment opportunities for women and has attracted back émigrés and the adult children of émigrés with education, skills and, in many cases, ideas about women's roles that

are quite different from those traditional to Nevis. The empowering effect of local women's lessened dependency on men and/or on remittances from overseas, coupled with female returnees' sense of efficacy, further positioned Nevisian women to question gender inequities. Ideas from the international discourse on women—filtered through the new governmental and NGO offices and also carried back to Nevis by many émigrés—are increasingly resonating with local women's lived experiences, and are being more and more widely embraced.

However, how do we explain the very different emphases of respondents? Why were some issues—like fathers' roles—brought up by almost all respondents, while others—like workplace sexual harassment and the lack of women in politics—brought up by so few? And what can be learned from understanding the reasons for these different emphases? To answer these questions, I examined the backgrounds of respondents, in particular, their gender socialization within their families of orientation, their relationships with their parents, their ages, levels of education, time spent outside St. Kitts-Nevis, time spent in countries with advanced women's movements, and the qualitative aspects of those overseas sojourns.

There were no patterns related to age, gender socialization or relationships with parents that distinguished those most aware of gender inequities (in both the domestic and the public spheres) from those less aware. All respondents had been raised in households where girls were expected to take responsibility for household chores at an early age and boys had fewer or no responsibilities, while having greater freedom outside the home. (Two female interviewees had been 'fostered out' to childless female relatives and grew up like 'only' children. Because of these positions, however, they seemed to have had even more household responsibilities than those raised with siblings.)¹⁷

And while those with the most education and with time spent outside the Caribbean tended to be more aware of societal issues, including gender-related issues, the exceptions to this pattern—those with lengthy study overseas who did not exhibit a great deal of gender consciousness as well as those with limited time outside St. Kitts-Nevis with high levels of gender awareness—caused me to look more closely at the qualitative aspects (type of education, socio-political involvement etc.) of their overseas experiences.

The key element that was present in all of those with the greatest awareness of gender inequities was exposure to the international discourse about women's issues. That exposure had the effect of broadening and deepening respondents' conceptualizations about what was unjust and what was possible. Specifically, the less exposure to 'feminist/womanist' ideas, the more the interviewee tended to focus on only intrafamilial issues, like the lack of fathers' support or the sexual abuse of children. The greater

the exposure to such ideas, the more likely the respondent was to see also the need for society-wide changes in the public sphere, like ending gender discrimination in the workplace or creating sexual harassment laws.

While one might have expected that time spent in countries with advanced women's movements would lead to greater gender consciousness, that in itself was necessarily not the case. What was important was the focus of training and experience overseas, not the length of time or the level of the women's movement, generally, in those countries. It's noteworthy, for example, that the three respondents who brought up the lack of women in politics had not only spent extensive time overseas (from eighteen to twenty-five years), but had studied and/or worked in social services. (One had also been involved in racial and gender justice activism in Canada.) Indeed, another respondent who'd spent almost ten years overseas, mainly in the U.S., but who'd studied in the natural sciences and had lived, mainly, in a small town in the American South (a conservative region of the country), did not bring up issues like sexual harassment, women in politics, or rape at all. And one of the most aware Nevisian respondents, the Director of the Change Centre, had never lived outside the Caribbean at all, but had studied at the Centre for Gender and Development Studies at the University of the West Indies in Barbados. Thus, the *content* of the overseas experience—specifically, the degree of exposure to the feminist ideas—emerged as the most important contributor to a developed consciousness about the many dimensions of patriarchy. The consciousnesses of these women—their embracing of “the empowering possibilities of the global narratives” (Boyle and Preves 2000:731)—dove-tailed with the various international conventions and agreements about women to create a progressive force for pushing St. Kitts-Nevis toward full equality for women. This finding, too, underscores the importance of the global discourse in influencing local thinking and policies.

Succinctly, the improved status of women in Nevis caused by the migration in the second half of the twentieth century made women ready for a change from traditional patriarchal arrangements in homes and in the public sphere. Nevis's more recent economic growth and expansion of job opportunities further strengthened women's position on the island and attracted back educated and capable émigrés also ready for change on Nevis. However, it was the discourse of the international women's movement which informed Nevisian women's challenge, a challenge simultaneously emanating from both ‘above’ (government legislation based on international conventions) and ‘below’ (individual women and small groups' activism and commitment to changing patriarchal forms throughout the society). The convergence of these interdependent factors at this historical moment—the turn of the twenty-first century—explains, I contend, the profound transformation now underway in Nevis.

CONCLUSION

Nevis is similar to other Caribbean islands in a number of important ways: its colonial history which brought European and African patriarchal systems to the island (but, through the vicissitudes of the slave system, attempted the destruction of the latter); its labor-intensive plantation economy dependent on unpaid or low-wage labor; the twentieth century decline in the importance of agriculture; and its resulting move toward tourism. However, Nevis also has distinct characteristics: It is one of the smallest islands in the Caribbean (and St. Kitts-Nevis constitutes the smallest Western nation in the United Nations). Nevis is also one of the few islands in the Caribbean that was occupied by only one European country (England), which led to an unmitigated imposition of the British worldview and culture. Its history of labor emigration is one of the oldest and its rates of emigration are some of the highest in the Caribbean. Resulting from emigration, the composition of its class structure is unusual in the total absence of a community of descendants of European colonizers, the near total absence of a privileged 'colored' class, and the positions in the highest stratum being held today mainly by people who are descendants of or who are themselves successful émigrés. And from the labor emigration in the last half of the twentieth century has developed a stronger position of women in their families and their communities. This history is the foundation of both many of the problems raised by the interviewees in my study and, paradoxically, of many of the solutions.

My research suggests that the following gender-related issues are of greatest concern to Nevisian women and have the broadest support for immediate change: improving fathers' financial and emotional support for their children; the elimination of domestic violence against women and sexual abuse of children; and ending job discrimination in the private sector. It also suggests that there is less interest in addressing the issues of rape of adult women and the negative social effects of tourism. And three issues—employment sexual harassment, gender discrimination in the public sector, and the lack of women in politics—are barely recognized as problems. However, when any of these issues was raised, even respondents who had not identified them as problematic in Nevis condemned them in principal.

On the other hand, this was not the case with two issues: the corporal punishment of children in schools and the expulsion of pregnant students from school. No respondent supported the elimination of corporal punishment in schools; even the few who did not physically punish their children at home and/or had not been spanked by their own parents considered physical punishment in schools appropriate. Not surprisingly,

no respondent saw a connection between the societal norm of hitting children and the pervasive problem of domestic violence. Undoubtedly, corporal punishment of children in schools and in most Nevisian homes will persist, and will, arguably, continue to undermine efforts to eliminate domestic violence against women.

Most interviewees supported the policy of expelling pregnant girls from school. Nevertheless, this policy is in the process of change, a change that was inevitable because Nevis's policy has been contradictory to the federation government's policy and to both the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the Convention for the Rights of the Child, which St. Kitts-Nevis signed on to in 1982 and 1993, respectively. As mentioned, the Nevis administration which was elected in July 2006 supports the federation's policy. Thus, despite quite limited support in Nevis, education for pregnant adolescents and adolescents who are new mothers will be available in Nevis in the near future. This reality again underscores the importance of St. Kitts-Nevis (and some individual Kittitian and Nevisian women's) being an integral part of an international move toward justice for women.

My research suggests, too, then, that this international discourse among women is a critical force contributing to the advancement of women in Nevis. While other factors—especially, Nevisian women's strengthened position that resulted from the late twentieth century emigration and the recent improved employment opportunities on Nevis—have laid a foundation, this international discourse has informed individuals' conceptualizing, has given a vocabulary for resistance, and has provided a legal framework on which Nevisian women can base their local strivings. Future, more comparative research may demonstrate that in small, homogeneous societies like Nevis, where conformity is highly valued and other-directedness is the norm, international influences typically play a more significant role in generating changes in gender relations than in larger, heterogeneous societies. It may also be found that (as Boyle and Preves's [2000] research implies) countries on the periphery, especially former colonies with dependent economies, are pressured by their economic vulnerability to conform to "universal" standards set by the international community.

The island of Nevis became connected to the world economic system through the international machinations spurred by patriarchal European imperialism. The female ancestors of the people I talked with survived over three hundred years of various configurations of a system designed essentially to use their bodies and their labor, while maintaining their powerlessness. Today, however, the women of Nevis are moving forward not only because of their own tradition of self-sufficiency (emanating from their West African heritage, but fortified by

slavery), not only because of their valuing of motherhood and, especially, their consanguineal families, but, ironically, also because of the influence of another international system: the multifaceted, somewhat amorphous, sometimes contentious, but inexorably forward-moving international women's movement.

Notes

- ¹ Madeira is an island in the Atlantic, southwest of and owned by Portugal.
- ² For example, "In 1682... 'An Act for preventing Barbarism of Negroes' was passed... to repeal a former act which had granted to the 'master of each Negro executed' for felony or robbery 'three thousand five hundred Pounds of Sugar'..." (Olwig 1993a:27). It seems slave owners were killing difficult or disabled enslaved people in order to collect the sugar.
- ³ Although most islands of the (then) British West Indies took part in this labor migration, during the 1970s the two islands of St. Kitts and Nevis surpassed "every Commonwealth country in the rate of net migration as a percent of the natural rate of growth of its people" (Mills in Olwig 1993a:145). And Nevis accounted for a disproportionate amount of this emigration, experiencing "a 16.5% decline in population" (Olwig 1993a:145, emphasis mine).
- ⁴ The forty respondents included five women who were not of Nevisian or Kittitian heritage and had come to Nevis as adults. All were of African descent, worked or volunteered extensively, and were fully integrated into the society. (I do not include their specific countries of origin here in order to protect the confidentiality of our interviews.) Respondents also included four women who were born overseas—one in the U.S. and three in England—of parents who had migrated from Nevis for work. As children, all four had visited Nevis repeatedly and felt they had "two countries." They had decided as young adults to move to Nevis and were, also, fully integrated into the society.
- ⁵ This may be assumed because of the pervasiveness of domestic violence throughout the Caribbean and most of the world. See, for example, Roberta Clarke's 1998 report, *Violence Against Women in the Caribbean*; and LeFranc and Rock's preliminary discussion of the immediate and underlying causes of domestic violence in the Caribbean, "The Commonality of Gender-based Violence" (2001).

- ⁶ Cynthia Mahabir's research in Grenada yielded similar findings. Exploring the various reasons "unlawful carnal knowledge" cases were not pursued, Mahabir found that mothers were often concerned about protecting their daughter's reputation and the family's honor. Their avoidance of the judicial system and of having their daughter testify in court was "guided by...cultural scripts that emphasize female modesty and decent character, not justice and fairness" (1996:108). Mahabir demonstrated that, in Grenada as in Nevis, "cultural barriers are as potent as institutional ones and can end up neutralizing the beneficial potential of laws for women" (113).
- ⁷ The Director of the Nevis Change Centre speculated that there may be a connection between the violence toward children in homes and their later becoming battering or battered adults. However, she made a distinction between "spanking" (which she described as an acceptable "part of our culture") and abuse, considering only the latter as a possible contributor to later adult violence. Director of the Nevis Change Centre. Interviewed by the author, 21 October 1998, Charlestown, Nevis.
- ⁸ See, for example, Straus (1991); Handwerker (1996); Straus and Yodanis (1996); and Gershoff (2002). Research conducted in St. Kitts also connects physical punishment to other types of impaired psychological adjustment in adults. See Rohner *et al.* (1991).
- ⁹ This quote is from our 2000 interview. In our 2006 interview, she modified her comments somewhat about the lack of unfairness in the public sector. While she still held that women and men in the same position received the same salary, she had observed that men tend to get more "benefits" in the forms of travel allowances, well-paid appointments to boards and commissions etc. Former St. Kitts-Nevis Permanent Secretary for Gender Affairs and current Ambassador Plenipotentiary and Permanent Secretary of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Affairs. Interviewed by the author, 1 November, 2006, Basseterre, St. Kitts.
- ¹⁰ For specifics on the number of women in politics, see *St. Kitts & Nevis Statistical Review 2004*, Section 16.
- ¹¹ Kitts has provided education for girls who are pregnant or new mothers since 1997. "In 1996, we had a two-day symposium which I got UNICEF to support...And out of that came a resolution that was forwarded by myself to the cabinet. And cabinet made a decision. So, from September '97, the Minister of Education, Mr. Herbert, made

a public announcement that they're allowed to go back to school." Permanent Secretary for Gender Affairs. Interviewed by the author, 6 January 2000, Basseterre, St. Kitts.

- ¹² Part III, Article 10 of the CEDAW states: "States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in order to ensure to them equal rights with men in the field of education and in particular to ensure...[Part f] the reduction of female student drop-out rates and the organization of programmes for girls and women who have left school prematurely." Part I, Article 28(b) of the CRC that States Parties must make "secondary education... available and accessible to every child." The CRC defines children as "every human being below the age of eighteen." The CEDAW can be accessed at: <www.unhchr.ch/him/menu3/b/e1cedaw.htm>. The CRC can be accessed at: <www.ohchr.org/english/law/pdf/crc.pdf>.
- ¹³ For a full discussion of sex tourism in the Caribbean, see Kampadoo (1999). And for a balanced discussion of all the social effects of tourism in the Caribbean, see Pattullo (1996), especially Chapters 3 and 4.
- ¹⁴ The challenging Nevis Reform Party criticized the Concerned Citizens Movement administration for its decision to sell 600 acres to a Canadian company for development into a five-star, 150-room hotel and 400 villas. See "Opposition Leader Unhappy with Pinney's Land Sale" (2005).
- ¹⁵ For an excellent description of the process by which the Committee for CEDAW reviews and advances member countries' progress on women's issues, see Chapter 3 of Merry (2006).
- ¹⁶ Boyle and Preves (2000), for example, examine the development of anti-female-genital-cutting legislation throughout the world, with a focus on African countries. Sally Engle Merry (2006) explores the process of adoption of domestic violence legislation in Hawai'i, Delhi, Beijing, Fiji and Hong Kong. Both studies demonstrate the influence of the international community on national policies regarding women's rights.
- ¹⁷ These socialization patterns are similar to those in other parts of the Caribbean. See, for example, Senior (1991), Chapter 2; and Barrow (1996), Chapter 7.

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