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Intra-Caribbean Migration and Cross Border Activities: Implications for Policy Intervention and Sustainable Development Within the Caribbean Community

By Oral Robinson, Ph.D. (The University of British Columbia)

Abstract

Research shows that well-managed migration systems that account for migrants' cross-border activities can promote development through remittances as well as the transfer of knowledge and skills. However, the potential of intra-Caribbean migrants' activities to foster socio-cultural change and development within the region has received limited scholarly attention. This presentation addresses this gap through a cross-national survey of 174 intra-Caribbean migrants. Drawing on measures of cross-border engagement developed by Kim et al. (2021), the study examines five domains of migrant activity: (1) frequency of visits to origin countries; (2) engagement in business activities in origin countries; (3) political involvement in origin countries; (4) participation in personal and family-related activities in origin countries; and (5) participation in social activities in origin countries. The study aims to identify the types and prevalence of cross-border activities among intra-Caribbean migrants and to assess how these activities shape migrants' attachments to both origin and destination countries. It also considers the broader implications of these practices for regional development. Findings indicate that migrants' activities across all five domains are widespread, reflecting a vibrant pattern of economic, social, political, and cultural engagement that extends across national borders. Importantly, cross-border engagement is positively associated with stronger attachment to migrants' countries of origin while also supporting integration within destination societies in the Caribbean. These findings suggest that intra-Caribbean migration can generate mutually beneficial outcomes for both sending and receiving societies. By facilitating ongoing social and economic linkages, intra-regional mobility has the potential to strengthen resilience and support development across the Caribbean. Informed by the principles of SDG 10.7, the presentation concludes by discussing policy approaches that could strengthen intra-regional mobility, enhance regional cooperation, and leverage

migrants' transnational engagements to foster sustainable development. This presentation fits the subtheme *Socioeconomic Transition*.

Assessing Acute Mental Health Status Post-Hurricane Melissa, in Westmoreland, Jamaica

By Angelleath James, Kimberley Foster, Avi Kenny, Novie Younger, Winston De La Haye, Caitlyn Sams, Jonathan Robinson, and Rupika Delgoda

Abstract

A cross-sectional survey of 108 adults from the most impacted parish (i.e., Westmoreland) assessed the psychosocial determinants shaping mental health outcomes in the aftermath of the disaster, using validated and ethically approved screening instruments, alongside measures of displacement, livelihood disruption, social support, and coping strategies. Findings reveal a substantial and socially stratified mental health burden. A striking 76.9% of respondents affirmed at least one component of a composite emotional distress indicator, which included stress, worry, sadness, frustration, feeling overwhelmed, or fatigued. Mental health distress was directly associated with physical infrastructural damage and resulting financial burden, amongst displaced individuals, with those who reported severe physical infrastructure impact, being more likely to report experiencing stress compared with those whose homes remained intact. Such displacements were unsurprisingly highest among those living in plywood based homes with simple corrugated zinc roofs, which are particularly vulnerable to severe damage from strong gusts. Similarly, respondents experiencing prolonged unemployment or destruction of their income source reported higher levels of post-traumatic stress than their employed counterparts. One-third of respondents (31.5%) reported experiencing suicidal ideation, with the highest prevalence noted within residents at the official emergency shelter. While stress was the most frequently cited emotional response (46.3%), gratitude was also present (22.2%), indicating a co-occurrence of vulnerability and resilience. Notably, strong family and community support networks served as a significant protective factor, with 57.4% of respondents relying on human connection as a primary coping mechanism. These results suggest that acute psychological distress following natural disasters is a clinical phenomenon shaped by environmental vulnerabilities. Effective post-disaster mental health interventions must therefore address the underlying social determinants (i.e., displacement, economic precarity, and social isolations) that concentrate psychological harm among the most disadvantaged.

On the Reification of Urbanisation – Prescribing a Role for Sociology in Caribbean Small Developing States

By Godfrey St. Bernard, PhD (The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine)

Abstract

Urban and rural land spaces represent real constructs in most Anglophone Caribbean jurisdictions. In some instances, it begs the question whether such constructs constitute realistic phenomena that are worthy of social analysis for policy prescriptions. The relevance of these constructs in policy contexts and the real differences that are allied to such constructs feature principally in the articulation of policy prescriptions targeting human populations and institutions according to the location in different spatial locations across landmasses.

Except for subjective notions, several Anglophone Caribbean jurisdictions lack objective frameworks for obtaining valid representations of spatial and temporal variations that reify change in the context of urban and rural land spaces. This paper draws on sociological insights that have their roots in classical sociological thought and render this reification process an exercise rooted in sociology and thus having implications for urban-rural classification in multi-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary knowledge accumulation and policy-setting agendas. The paper also addresses the relevance of a bipolar versus a granular framework for conceptualisation, classification, and measurement, active processes in the context of scholarly discourses and their pragmatic bases for decision-making and policy-framing.

In Trinidad and Tobago, for example, the magnitude of statistical measures representing the urban concentration of its national population is grossly understated, principally because there is no clearly articulated objective methodology for reifying urban and rural land spaces. The urban/rural character of spaces is a moving target and often times the paucity of data collection activities; sometimes transcending poor standards but with obvious limitations still persist. These realities continue to obstruct progressive thrusts towards favourable change in the future, a process that will intensify and further stymie spatial analyses predicated upon the classification of spaces and their interaction with human populations and social institutions.

Keywords: Urbanisation, urban concentration, urban/rural classification, spatial policy, measurement and classification

Interrogating the Assistive Capacity of Artificial Intelligence for Welfare Administration Systems: SDG #1 - No Poverty and the Case of CARICOM Member States

By Godfrey St. Bernard, PhD and Hafeeza Hosein Shah, PhD (The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine)

Abstract

In CARICOM Member States, bringing favourable redress to ending extreme poverty strives upon being able to positively impact all dimensions of welfare administration. In safeguarding this process, the assistive capabilities of AI remain imperatives involving moving beyond input, output, and outcome that have traditionally been associated with strictly human, and in more recent times, computer-assisted technologies.

The aim of this paper is to recognise prospects for ending extreme poverty in accordance with SDG #1: No Poverty by 2030. Articulating useful insights that have utility for conceptual, methodological, and pragmatic interventions, the paper considers the pros and cons of drawing on the techniques associated with AI to address the mandate of SDG #1.

Advancing beyond traditional human intelligence and computer-assisted technologies, the assistive capabilities of AI have been evident based on techniques such as machine learning, predictive analytics, natural language processing, and geospatial intelligence. These techniques rely on qualitative and quantitative paradigms and have been significant in enhancing understanding and facilitating contestation that critically evaluates and draws closer to claims about truth and threats to the truth.

The paper is mindful of the risks associated with data privacy, the sanctity of ethics, the persistence of the digital divide, threats to equity and fairness, and variable lifestyle choices associated with human rights.

Keywords: Artificial intelligence, human intelligence, assistive technologies, computer-assisted technologies, SDGs, welfare administration

Contested Care? Trump 2.0, Cuban Medical Diplomacy, and Jamaica's Struggle for Health Sovereignty

By Aieka Yasheva Smith (The University of the West Indies, Mona)

Abstract

Cuban medical diplomacy has long been framed as a hallmark of South-South solidarity, with thousands of healthcare professionals deployed across the Global South in response to crises and chronic shortages. Jamaica has been a key beneficiary since the 1970s, with persistent gaps in its healthcare system making Cuban assistance both a public health lifeline and an instrument of soft power. The United States has characterised these medical missions as systems of “forced labour,” a claim rebuked by some Caribbean leaders who emphasize their importance to national development. This study employs qualitative content analysis of official communications from Jamaica's Ministry of Health and Wellness (MOHW), Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade (MFAFT), the

Jamaica Information Service (JIS), and national newspapers to examine how Cuban medical assistance is framed amid renewed U.S.–Cuba tensions under a “Trump 2.0” context. It asks whether shifts in U.S. policy influence the scope, perception, and political framing of Cuban medical diplomacy in Jamaica, and explores the implications for healthcare sovereignty and South-South cooperation.

Findings indicate that Cuban medical missions have been central to strengthening Jamaica’s health sector and advancing Vision 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However, renewed U.S. pressure introduces diplomatic and developmental challenges, as Jamaica balances longstanding ties with both Washington and Havana. U.S. sanctions risk destabilizing regional solidarity, constraining policy autonomy, and exposing vulnerabilities in health security and crisis response. By situating these dynamics within the Caribbean’s history of external intervention and ideological contestation, the paper argues that narratives surrounding Cuban medical diplomacy function as sites of geopolitical struggle. These issues raise critical questions about sovereignty, intraregional cooperation, and the endurance of solidarity within the broader politics of care. The study has implications for policymaking in small states, particularly in navigating external pressure while safeguarding health systems and diplomatic flexibility.

Racial Politics across diasporas: The Construction of Indo-Caribbean identity in North America

By Cristine Sabrina Khan (Stony Brook University, SUNY)

Abstract

How does race play a role in shaping Caribbean politics both in the region and in the diaspora? This presentation will explore this question by examining how second-generation Indo-Caribbean communities in New York City and Toronto negotiate racial identity in relation to Blackness, Asianness, and diasporic Caribbean belonging. While Caribbean sociology has long attended to creolization and postcolonial identity formation in unpacking racial formation, less attention has been paid to how these dynamics are reconfigured among second-generation populations in North American racial regimes. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork, in-depth interviews, and digital analysis of Instagram-based activism during the COVID-19 pandemic, this paper argues that diasporic Indo-Caribbean identity is actively constructed through both solidarities with and distancing from Blackness, shaped by inherited colonial hierarchies and contemporary multicultural frameworks. Digital platforms, in particular, have become key sites where younger generations articulate political belonging, contest anti-Blackness, and negotiate diasporic identity across national contexts. By comparing New York City and Toronto, this study highlights how differing national racial formations shape the expression of Indo-Caribbean identity, while also revealing shared transnational

discourses that circulate across diaspora networks. This paper contributes to Caribbean sociology by extending discussions of race and identity beyond the region, foregrounding second-generation experiences, and demonstrating how digital spaces mediate contemporary forms of Caribbean political and cultural belonging.

How Fertility, Ageing and Migration Intersect to Impact Guyana's Social Development

By Marlon A. Bristol, Duane Edwards (University of Guyana)

Abstract

This paper examines interaction among fertility, ageing, and migration in Guyana and analyses their implications for social development. Utilizing National Census data, demographic indicators, and descriptive analysis, the investigation focuses on Guyana's demographic transition within the context of the country's rapid economic growth and internationally recognized advances in climate finance innovations. The central argument is that Guyana's economic transformation and environmental stewardship are increasingly juxtaposed against demographic realities that intersect to constrain social development. This creates a paradox, if not reconciled can stymie progress towards sustainable development. It concludes by proposing an integrated demographic policy framework that addresses the spatial and temporal dimensions of the country's human capital needs and the policy gaps identified across fertility, ageing, and migration.

Beyond the Surname: A Comparative Analysis of Political Dynasties and Democratic Transition in the Dutch and Anglophone Caribbean

By Ahmet Talan

Abstract

This paper investigates the enduring phenomenon of political dynasties in the Caribbean, focusing on Aruba, Curaçao, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago. By including Dutch Caribbean territories, the study facilitates a crucial cross-linguistic comparison of dynastic patterns in small island polities, addressing the conference's aim to rethink sociological analysis through regional experiences. Despite shifts toward meritocratic governance, several Caribbean systems remain structured around "dynastic capital," where lineage functions as a primary vehicle for political mobilization.

The central research question is: How do dynastic structures shape electoral behavior and simultaneously constrain the leadership identities and strategic choices of political successors? Using a Most Similar Systems comparative design, this study draws on electoral data, legislative records, and elite interviews to analyze historical transitions and

contemporary voting patterns. It examines the "brand name" effect—whereby electorates treat lineage as a proxy for stability—alongside the "burden of legacy," where successors are constrained by public demands for continuity of their predecessors' charisma.

Theoretical contributions involve interrogating the tension between traditional dynastic authority and modern democratic norms, contributing to debates on post-colonial governance and institutional consolidation. Key findings indicate that while dynasties may provide perceived stability in volatile environments, they often inhibit institutional innovation and suppress internal party democracy.

Policy Implications & SDGs: The paper advocates for the institutionalization of transparent internal party mechanisms to balance legacy politics with merit-based representation. This aligns with SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) by supporting inclusive, accountable, and democratic governance structures in the Caribbean.

Skin Color and Asset Ownership: Intraracial Stratification in the Anglophone Caribbean

By Monique D.A. Kelly

Abstract

BACKGROUND

Some strands of Caribbean scholarship and national discourse emphasize creolization and multiracial harmony, at times downplaying the extent to which color-based stratification shapes material outcomes. While prior work has identified color hierarchies within specific countries, there remains a lack of systematic cross-national analyses of their contemporary effects and variation across contexts.

OBJECTIVE

As inequality in the Anglophone Caribbean is primarily understood as class-based, this study examines how skin color structures asset ownership (i.e., household amenities) among Black-identified individuals across nine countries, independent of class origins (proxied by respondents' and mothers' education), and assesses how this relationship varies across national contexts.

METHODS

Using 2014 and 2016 AmericasBarometer data, household amenities are measured as a polychoric principal component index of seven assets (standardized). Survey-weighted linear regression models with country fixed effects estimate within-country relationships, and interaction models generate country-specific effects. Models control for demographic and socioeconomic factors.

RESULTS

Darker skin color is consistently associated with lower levels of household amenities across countries. However, the magnitude of this association varies substantially. Stronger color gradients are observed in countries such as the Bahamas and Antigua and Barbuda, while weaker effects appear in others, including Grenada and Dominica. Results are robust to controls and are not driven by interviewer bias.

CONCLUSIONS

Skin color is a consistent axis of stratification in the Anglophone Caribbean, but its impact is context dependent. This study provides a comparative analysis of color stratification, showing that racialized hierarchies vary in intensity across societies. Findings highlight the need for policy frameworks that address persistent color-based disparities in access to material resources, with implications for equitable and sustainable development.

Access is Not Belonging: Reframing Inclusion in Caribbean Societies in Transition

By Ato Kenya Rockcliffe (The University of Trinidad and Tobago)

Abstract

Across the Caribbean, socio-economic transitions, including resource-driven growth, digital transformation, structural adjustment, and post-disaster recovery, have intensified longstanding questions about inclusion and development. In many policy and institutional contexts, access to services, opportunities, and spaces is treated as a proxy for inclusion. This paper challenges that assumption, arguing that access alone cannot account for individuals' experiences of social integration. Put differently, access does not necessarily produce belonging.

The paper advances a conceptual framework of relational belonging to examine how inclusion is shaped in Caribbean societies undergoing rapid change. Drawing on Postcolonial Theory and Critical Political Economy, and engaging with Michel Foucault's work on governmentality, it critiques dominant models of inclusion that prioritise formal participation while overlooking the processes through which individuals are recognised as legitimate members of a community. At its best, Caribbean sociological traditions instead foreground the enduring influence of colonial histories, uneven development, and geopolitical positioning on lived experience.

The framework is organised around three interrelated dimensions: regimes of moral evaluation, which structure judgements of worth and legitimacy; community embeddedness, which captures the relational ties that sustain belonging; and historical-political situatedness, which highlights how access is mediated by broader

structures of inequality and governance. Together, these dimensions shift the analytic focus from participation as presence to belonging as recognition and lived experience. By reframing inclusion through a Caribbean lens, this paper contributes to efforts to rethink sociological theory in contexts of transition and offers a conceptual tool with implications for policy, programme design, and evaluation across sectors.

Keywords: Relational belonging; Social inclusion; Recognition; Caribbean societies; Socio-economic transition

The Decolonization of Sociological Theory at the UWI Mona Campus – Jamaica

By Michael Barnett (The University of the West Indies, Mona)

Abstract

At the UWI Mona Campus, Jamaica, the present team of Sociological Theorists in the Department of Sociology, Psychology and Social Work, Dr, Michael Barnett (myself), Dr. Orville Taylor and Ms Rachalee Mitchell, have embarked on the systematic decolonization of our Sociological Theory curriculum, since the beginning of the new Millenium (the 21st Century). In terms of Classical Sociological theory, of interest is that the work of W.E.B. Dubois, (a renowned Sociologist in and of himself), has been added to the pantheon of sociological theoretical contributions from the well known European Classical theorists such as Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, and Gerg Simmel. The justification here, being that Dubois obtained his Ph.D in Historical Sociology from Harvard University as early as 1895 and was actively conducting landmark sociological research in Philadelphia during the 1890s, at the same time his peers, Max Weber, Georg Simmel, and notably Emile Durkheim were theorizing and conducting research. (Especially as far as Durkheim was concerned with his work on suicide). This led to his landmark book publication, "The Philadelphia Negro," which was published in 1899. This book essentially demonstrated clearly that the high level of crime and delinquency in Black communities in Philadelphia, was due to the deplorable racialized social conditions that Black persons were exposed in the city of Philadelphia, as opposed to being biologically pre-disposed to Criminal behaviour, which was the popular sentiment of White America at that time. Essentially, Dubois was a pioneer in the Sociology of Race. (Which before him was not a dimension of Sociology that was given any serious attention.) With careful analysis of other Sociological studies that W.E.B. Dubois has engaged in, our Sociological Theory team/unit, have concluded that W.E.B. Dubois was also the pioneer of Rural Studies, Urban Studies and the Sociology of Religion.

Nationalism, Sovereignty, and the Future of CARICOM

By Oliver Benoit

ABSTRACT

The historical development of Caribbean societies cannot be understood outside the context of colonialism and its enduring legacies. Central to this history was the dismantling of colonial political structures in the latter half of the twentieth century and the subsequent struggles of newly independent states. Of particular significance was the collapse of the West Indian Federation (1958–1962), which exposed tensions between regional integration and nationalist aspirations among Caribbean territories. These tensions continue to shape the contemporary Caribbean political landscape. Recent global developments suggest that Caribbean islands exhibit varying levels of nationalism in response to growing geopolitical pressures and external influences perceived as threats to sovereignty and national dignity. In this context, regional alliances such as the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) have become less effective mechanisms of collective resistance. Nationalism, understood here as the principle of sovereign, self-governing nations composed of equal citizens endowed with dignity and liberty, informs both political organization and social relations within the region. This paper argues that enhancing CARICOM's effectiveness in responding to global threats requires strengthening nationalism within individual Caribbean states. Such an approach will shape the capacity of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) to respond collectively to external threats to regional stability, particularly amid the resurgence of nationalist politics in the international system.

Social and Spatial (In)Justice Tropical Paradise and Dispossession Narrative. Race, Class, and Gender.

By Jessica Minnis

Abstract

This paper argues that the Caribbean's global branding as a tropical paradise disguises the social and spatial (in)justices that structure everyday life in the region. Building on insights developed while editing the volume, I show how identity, gender inequality, environmental vulnerability, and the recolonization of space reveal the ongoing negotiation of belonging within islands shaped by tourism, neoliberalism, and climate change. Drawing on Lefebvre's production of space, Soja's spatial justice, and Bufacchi's dimensions of social injustice, the paper offers a conceptual analysis of how power and exclusion are embedded in Caribbean societies. I propose that these contradictions are not peripheral but central to understanding how Caribbean space is produced, contested, and lived.

Keywords: Caribbean Inequalities, Environmental Vulnerability, Gender and Race, Identity, Recolonization of Space, Spatial (In)Justice, and Tourism and Development.

Title: Debris, violence, and the colonality of displacement

By Ian Bethel-Bennett

Abstract

Caroline Elkins refers to this as Lawful lawlessness, I am using these concepts to underpin the displacement of local life and its replacement with the global unreal. As Caribbean societies in The Bahamas, Puerto Rico, Guadeloupe disappear through the legal movement of people under various forms of trade liberalisation, the body of the local is lost. State violence turns on the people who are 'the problem' in the society and frames them as such. I take 2 chapters from the text *The Inequities of Caribbean space and designed places: Race, class and gender* (2026) and build them out to show how laws are used to displace and upend local communities through what Comaroff and Comaroff refer to as Law and disorder.

The marginal existence of many people and their displacement deepens violence which manifests in various aspects of cultural violence. As inequalities grow, so does violence. Questions: As local Caribbean spaces disappear into global designed places, the inequities in people's lives grows. How does spatial erasure increase violence in some Caribbean spaces? What aspects of violence should we understand this larger social inequity to produce and how can they become visible in a context where non-physical, direct, violence is often ignored because it is not seen?

Approach: The work draws on Mbembe's concept necropolitics and, Galtung's cultural and structural violence and Edward Soja's Spatial (In)Justice that becomes what Rob Nixon calls slow violence to underpin the exploration of (recent) displacement.

So you went to Convent: Education, Social Mobility, and Civil Society

By Alison Mc Letchie (South Carolina State University)

Abstract

This chapter is a case study that examines the outcomes of women who attended the first and oldest (1836) continuously operating high school in Trinidad and Tobago, St. Joseph's Convent – Port of Spain (SJC-POS). Established to serve the children of the mostly Spanish and French planter class and other elite Catholic families, since it was founded, the school has emerged as one of the best on in the nation. SJC-POS is often considered as a first-choice school when parents list their preferences to the

Ministry of Education for their girls writing the Secondary Entrance Assessment (SEA) previously known as Exhibition and Common Entrance. First-choice schools, also known as, prestige schools or seven-years, are desirable because of their perceived academic rigor, as feeder institutions for university, the social status their students and graduates are often assigned and for some, ties to religious organizations.

The chapter considers the status of women within three national sectors: the judiciary, board of trustee membership of businesses and the National Senate (all appointed positions) from 1900 – 2011. Archival sources were used to create a final list of 871 persons, 166 were women, across these three sectors. This chapter hypothesizes that although women have long had access to high quality education on the islands, women will be largely absent from these public, powerful fields in deference to the traditional roles and values subscribed to them on the islands. It also argues that even when present, female graduates from prestige schools will be overrepresented compared to women from other schools in these sectors, although educational opportunities became more diverse on the island over time thus helping to maintain the reputation of these schools as high value institutions. Informed by Mills' (1956) elite theory and rooted in Beckford's (1972) economic theory, this work is part of a larger project that surveys the elite of Trinidad and Tobago.

Fluid Place and Space: The Politics of Inclusion

By Dr. Mayuri Deka

Abstract

The diversity of the Caribbean has historically ensued in dynamic societies where varied socio-cultural, ethnic, economic and political contexts come in constant contact. While this has contributed to the immense richness of the societal fabric, there are also many occasions of confrontation and chaos. This is very apparent in the current climate of the region where religious intolerance, political extremism and growing economic inequality are being exacerbated with man-made and environmental disasters. Within this instability, the location of place and space in immigrant memory is becoming fraught with contentions. The fixity of geographical place and the corresponding space occupied by an immigrant is framed within discussions about the conception of 'home.' Within the Caribbean diaspora this discussion usually centers around a nation or socio-cultural community. In constant movement, the immigrant experience is poly-layered and hybrid and filtered through the channel of their individual and collective remembrance. Ramabai Espinet in *The Swinging Bridge* defines space within the context of the memory of India and Trinidad entrenched in the Canadian landscape. In describing her definition of home, Espinet relates it to her sense of Self and alludes to the non-fixity of the concept. For Caribbean immigrants in the diaspora, this envisioning of a flexible home results in a

re-thinking of the concepts of nation, citizenship and belonging. This influences not only abstract theorization but also the politics of inclusivity/marginalization. This paper focuses on the Caribbean immigrants' negotiations of the political and geopolitical transitions that this rapidly transforming world is enforcing. It answers the question of how a poly-layered experience of place and space stretched over multiple locales redefines the sense of 'home' and strengthens/weakens the framework of inclusive politics.

Caribbean Liberal Legal Ideology: Repression, Modernity, and Rupture

By Michael Stevenson

Abstract

This paper explores the continuing reception of liberal legal ideology in the Commonwealth Caribbean through the lens of Lacanian psychoanalytical theory; in particular, Jacques Lacan's theory of *the Real*. The author places the examination within the context of a framing of modernity as rupture and examines the possible genealogical linkages of Caribbean repression (in relation to liberal legal ideology) to a much older rupture at the heart of the enlightenment project and modernity.

Panel Title

Negotiating Change in the Cayman Islands: Migration, Education, and Community Adaptation

Panel Organizer

The University College of the Cayman Islands

Panel Abstract

This panel offers a glimpse of the changing socio-economic landscape of the Cayman Islands through critical analyses of migration, institutional adaptation, educational transformation and other socio-economic realities within a small island society. Situated within the conference theme, *Sociology of Societies in Transition: Exploring Tensions Between Stability and Change*, the panel examines how local institutions and social systems respond to shifting demographic and post-pandemic realities.

The first paper interrogates the socio-economic and cultural implications of migration within a small but extremely diverse society, using Caymanian literature as a lens through which questions of identity, policy transition, and social transformation are critically examined. The second paper examines the role of formal and informal STEM initiatives—including summer camps and after-school programmes—in expanding educational access, strengthening early STEM identity, and preparing young people for

participation in evolving economies. And, the third paper explores transitions within education and religious institutions following the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing on how schools and churches adapted to new social realities while negotiating tensions between continuity and community disruption.

Collectively, the papers by Drs Gayle, Gordon and Fullerton-Cooper will present the conference delegates with a glimpse of how Caymanian society, not often viewed in academic spheres - navigates competing pressures of globalization, social continuity, and institutional resilience. The panel highlights the ways in which migration, education, religion, and youth development function - not just as isolated social concerns, but as interconnected spaces through which broader socioeconomic transitions are negotiated within a Caribbean small island state.

“The More Things Change the More They Remain the Same”: Literary Interrogation of Migration in the Cayman Context

By Stephanie Fullerton-Cooper, PhD

Abstract

This paper explores the socio-economic dynamics of migration within the Cayman Islands, where more than 130 nationalities coexist within a limited geographic space. It examines the major drivers of migration to the islands and considers the historical foundations of the local/expatriate dichotomy that continues to shape contemporary social discourse. The study critically interrogates the ways in which migration has influenced key social realities, including employment, politics, education, culture, and land ownership. Using a literary lens, the paper references Caymanian writings over an approximately eighteen-year period and investigates how these texts interrogate migration and social transformation within an increasingly globalized society. In doing so, the study also considers recent shifts in migration laws and policies following the Cayman Islands' 2025 elections, questioning whether such developments have meaningfully altered the territory's socio-political and socio-economic realities. The paper concludes that Caymanian writing functions as a powerful medium through which the complexities of migration in a small island state may be critically examined. However, it also raises broader questions of whether recent transitions represent genuine transformation or whether, as the adage suggests, “the more things change, the more they remain the same”.

Keywords: migration, transition, local/expatriate dichotomy, Cayman literature, socio-economic and socio-political change

Transforming STEM Education in the Cayman Islands: Youth Engagement, Teacher Development, and Community-driven Innovation

By Antoinette Gayle, EdD

Abstract

Over the past decade, the Cayman Islands has undergone significant social and economic change driven by globalization, technological advancement, and evolving workforce demands. These shifts have increased pressure on the education system to prepare students for emerging STEM fields while maintaining stable curricular structures. This presentation examines how community based STEM initiatives contribute to this landscape and reveal sociological tensions between continuity and transformation. Drawing on ten years of experience as a STEM Camp Director and Coordinator, I explore how both informal and formal STEM programs have influenced youth engagement, teacher practice, and public perceptions of science and technology. An annual summer STEM camp for students aged 11–13 has functioned as a space for early STEM identity formation, problem solving, and collaboration. Afterschool programs have broadened access and help normalize STEM as an integral part of everyday learning. At the tertiary level, undergraduate students serve as STEM camp assistants and counsellors, strengthening a pipeline of near peer mentors while enriching their own learning through community based, project based experiences and research embedded in chemistry courses. Together, these initiatives show how STEM education operates as a social project shaping how Cayman negotiates stability and change.

Keywords: STEM education, Cayman Islands, social transformation, youth development, project-based learning, informal education

Social Impact and Pedagogical Responses: Adapting to Pandemic Engineered Realities

By Erica Gordon, PhD

Abstract

The Cayman Islands, like the rest of the world, had to do a rapid reset in the social and educational spheres when the COVID 19 pandemic ravaged the world. Schools were forced online and students, educators, administrators and support staff grew accustomed to and navigated the vagaries and challenges of the digital environment. New systems of

teaching and learning, communication, knowledge acquisition, measurement and assessment were developed, introduced and embraced. Churches also migrated online. While many lamented the negative impact of an online existence, some saw these changes as advantageous and even after COVID was no longer a threat, even today, some persons are still hiding behind their screens and have not recovered from the impacts of the pandemic. An overview of some of the social impacts of, and pedagogical responses to COVID will reveal both negative and positive responses that were occasioned by the pandemic.

Keywords: education, social interaction, pedagogy, resilience, COVID 19, Cayman Islands

Green Crimes and Gold Mines: Harms to the Surinamese Amazon

By Esmée Hubbard van den Driest (Utrecht University, Netherlands)

Abstract

Gold is one of Suriname's most important natural resources, accounting for approximately 80% of national export earnings. While the sector generates significant socio-economic benefits, it is also associated with deforestation, mercury contamination, and broader ecological destruction. Despite widespread recognition of these environmental impacts, policy responses remain fragmented and limited. Suriname's strong economic dependence on extractive industries, combined with institutional fragility and governance challenges, complicates the implementation of meaningful environmental reform.

Against a backdrop of record-high gold prices, this research examines the relationship between gold mining, environmental harm, and state governance in Suriname. It addresses the following question: *What role does Surinamese state governance play in gold mining-related environmental harm?*

Drawing on a green criminological perspective, this study analyses the governance dynamics that sustain environmental harm within Suriname's gold mining sector. Based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in 2025 and 2026, the study argues that environmental harm persists not primarily through direct state intervention, but through processes of strategic omission embedded within state governance. Such harm is reproduced through the absence of selective application of lawmaking, law enforcement and transparency in relation to gold mining practices. Using a harms-based approach in green criminology, the analysis moves beyond narrow legal definitions of crime and legality to examine how state governance is constituted, which forms of authority are legitimised, and how processes of criminalisation are negotiated and contested.

The findings highlight the importance of recognising plural governance arrangements in designing more effective responses to environmental harm in Suriname's gold mining

sector. The study also demonstrates the analytical value of integrating green criminological insights into sociological debates by foregrounding environmental destruction while interrogating the role of power in extractive economies.

Privilege, School Context, and COVID-19: An Intersectional Sociological Analysis of Academic Success

By Onika S. Noreiga

Abstract

Quality schooling is central to Caribbean development. It strengthens human capital, raises productivity, and supports innovation, economic diversification, and sustainable growth. Education characterized by high academic success also contributes to social mobility, civic participation, public-sector capacity, and responses to climate and environmental challenges. In this context, the present study aims to answer the research question “How do privilege, school context, and the disruptions of COVID-19 intersect to shape academic success in selected primary schools in Trinidad and Tobago?” Complementing this macro perspective this qualitative, multi-site case study draws on an intersectional framework and the analytic triad of intersections, reflections, and projections to explore how privilege and school context interact to produce academic achievement, with COVID-19 treated as a temporal disruptor that reveals how school structures and practices adapt to reproduce, or intensify inequality. The cases comprise three primary schools across school types - one government, one denominational and one private. Data were generated from six students, four administrators, and seventeen teachers. Findings show that academic success emerges from the convergence of internal school dynamics and external conditions, with effects varying across school types. Key influences include socioeconomic status, gender, ethnicity, responsive leadership, COVID-19, stakeholder involvement, religiosity, school culture, educational stability, and self-determination. These intersecting factors generate distinct but overlapping pathways to academic success. The findings underscore the importance of responsive, inclusive school leadership and culturally sustaining practices as critical levers for creating equitable learning environments and communities of learners that support sustained academic success. Overall, the study highlights the value of applying a sociological lens to educational policy and practice, emphasizing that intentional resource alignment, inclusive governance, and sustained attention to intersecting inequalities are essential for advancing equitable education.

Keywords: intersectionality, inequality, academic success, school governance, COVID-19

Diaspora, Dual Citizenship, and Shared Governance in Guyana: Constitutional Stability and Social Transition in a Transnational Age

By Courtney Abel (University of Guyana)

Abstract

Guyana stands at a decisive moment of social and constitutional transition. Oil wealth, digital connectivity, global migration, and renewed geopolitical attention have transformed the conditions under which the Guyanese state must govern. Yet many of its constitutional assumptions remain rooted in an older territorial imagination of sovereignty, citizenship, and political belonging. This paper examines the tension between stability and change through the question of diaspora inclusion in national governance, with particular attention to the constitutional exclusion of dual citizens from certain forms of political office.

The central research question is whether a small, post-colonial, resource-rich society can continue to define political belonging primarily by territorial residence and singular allegiance when its economic survival, social reproduction, and intellectual capacity have long depended upon transnational networks. The paper adopts a socio-legal and theoretical methodology, drawing on constitutional analysis, diaspora studies, post-colonial theory, and the sociology of governance. It argues that the Guyanese diaspora should not be understood merely as an external population of sentimental or economic significance, but as part of the extended social capacity of the nation.

The paper's theoretical contribution lies in reframing diaspora participation as a question of shared governance rather than symbolic consultation. It contends that stability in a plural, post-colonial society is not secured by exclusion, but by designing institutions capable of structuring dispersed power responsibly. Policy implications include reform of dual citizenship rules, stronger conflict-of-interest safeguards, diaspora advisory and participatory mechanisms, and more decentralised forms of constitutional governance. The paper concludes that Guyana's transition requires not only economic development, but a deeper sociology of belonging: one that recognises that the nation now lives both within and beyond its borders.

Factors Affecting Poverty in Guyana: Evidence from a Multidimensional Capability Approach

By Denzel DeSouza

Abstract

This research investigates the disconnect between economic expansion and multidimensional poverty reduction within the framework of Amartya Sen's capability approach. Although Guyana has experienced rapid economic growth, particularly following the emergence of the oil sector, improvements in welfare and living conditions have not occurred evenly across the population. The research therefore, examines the key economic and social factors influencing poverty in Guyana from a multidimensional human development perspective over the period 1991–2024. Using annual time-series data obtained from the United Nations Development Programme, the World Bank, Guyana's Ministry of Finance, and other development databases, the research constructs a multidimensional poverty index that incorporates the standard dimensions of education, health, and living standards, and includes the environment as an additional dimension for measuring poverty. An Auto-Regressive Distributed Lag (ARDL) model is applied to examine both the short-run and long-run relationships between the poverty index and selected explanatory variables, including unemployment, inflation, GDP growth, remittances, total population, and government cash transfer policies. The research adopts a quantitative explanatory design and employs descriptive statistics, unit root testing, bounds testing, co integration analysis, and diagnostic procedures to ensure model validity and reliability. The expected findings suggest that unemployment and inflation will worsen multidimensional poverty outcomes, while GDP growth, remittances, and cash transfer programmes are expected to reduce poverty levels and improve overall welfare conditions. However, the research also anticipates demonstrating that economic growth alone is insufficient to guarantee broad-based improvements in human development, particularly among vulnerable and underserved communities. The research aims to contribute to the limited literature on multidimensional poverty in Guyana and provide empirical evidence to support more inclusive and sustainable poverty reduction policies.

Keywords: Inequality, poverty, Guyana, Multidimensional, Capability approach

Labour Market Effects of Guyana's Pathway Program in Mahaica-Berbice

By Ashana Webster

Abstract

This study examined the labour market effects of Guyana's Pathway Program in Mahaica-Berbice, Region 5, guided by four objectives: determining whether participation improves formal employment opportunities, investigating the relationship between duration of participation and labour market attachment, evaluating the extent to which

work placements increase employability and job readiness, and analyzing how program tasks contribute to skill-job matching. Grounded in Human Capital Theory, Labour Market Segmentation Theory, Job Search Theory, and matching theory, the study employed a mixed-methods design combining a 636-respondent digital questionnaire with ten semi-structured interviews involving participants, workplace supervisors, and Regional Democratic Council officials. Quantitative data were analyzed using binary logistic regression, Spearman rank correlation, Omnibus Likelihood Ratio test and Kruskal-Wallis tests via Python; qualitative data were thematically analyzed following Braun and Clarke's approach.

Findings show that placement type, rather than duration or self-rated skill acquisition, is the strongest predictor of formal employment: participants placed at Government Administration locations were over six times more likely to be formally employed than those placed at Schools. This gap is linked to the smaller pool of qualified participants placed at school, where 89.2% reported education ranging from no formal schooling to secondary level, facing vacancies largely limited to unqualified roles such as custodial positions, too few to absorb their transition to formal employment. Duration of participation was not significantly associated with formal employment, while self-rated skill acquisition was counterintuitively, negatively associated with it, a pattern linked in interviews to participants' reluctance to pursue further academic qualification. The study concludes that the program's effectiveness as a pathway to formal employment depends less on participation or skill perception but rather on the institutional placement type and participants' willingness to formalize their qualifications. The study recommends extended structured skills-matching across placement types alongside inter-ministerial support for participant qualification and digital literacy.

Keywords: Mahaica-Berbice, Pathway Program, Labour Market, Employability, Human Capital

Relationship Between Police Expenditure on Serious Crime and Public Safety in Guyana: Evidence from Fiscal and Crime Data (2015-2025)

By Naudia Critchlow

Abstract

This evaluative study seeks to examine the effectiveness of fiscal expenditure on policing in Guyana from 1994 to 2024 to determine whether there have been any statistically significant changes in terms of public safety as a result of these investments. Therefore, the research aims to: (i) investigate police expenditure trends with reference to national budgetary allocations; (ii) evaluate the correlation between expenditure and crime rates; and (iii) identify institutional and structural factors mediating this relationship. Additionally, the study draws on evidence from two interlinked theories. Firstly, Becker's (1968)

economic theory of crime which states that criminal activity is rational and is influenced by signs of deterrence contained in policing capabilities, whereas, under the Routine Activity Theory proposed by Cohen & Felson (1979), the occurrence of crime is defined by the interaction between motivated offenders, suitable targets, and lack of competent guardianship, which this study contends persists in Guyana. Methodologically, the study employs a longitudinal mixed-methods design. The quantitative analysis involves the use of Ordinary Least Squares regression model and Granger causality test on time series data collected from national budget estimates, the Guyana Bureau of Statistics, and UNODC crime records. Meanwhile, quantitative analysis will be used to supplement the findings through the Auditor General's reports along with institutional assessments of the GPF's organisational capacity to examine whether factors such as operational integrity and allocative efficiency mediate observed outcomes. Preliminary findings suggest that despite increases in nominal spending, there has been no significant reduction in crime due to inefficiencies in spending, lack of accountability systems, and inadequate guardian capabilities which is consistent with the Routine Activity analysis regarding structural vulnerability. The study therefore recommends key institutional reforms, geared toward more evidence-based and community-centred strategies of policing since fiscal investments alone remain insufficient to address this problem.

Keywords: policing expenditure, crime deterrence, Routine Activity Theory, Guyana Police Force, public safety governance.

THE ROLE OF TELEMEDICINE IN HEALTHCARE ACCESS, HEALTH OUTCOMES, AND HEALTH SYSTEM EFFICIENCY IN GUYANA'S HINTERLAND REGIONS: AN ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

By Toneshia Peters

Abstract

Geographical isolation continues to hinder the equitable delivery of health care in Guyana's hinterland, as the distances involved, together with the scarcity of specialists and transport difficulties, can raise the cost of health care provision and worsen clinical and economic outcomes. This study explores the role of telemedicine in enhancing access to health care and treatment, as well as the efficiency of health care delivery, in Guyana's hinterland regions. The study also considers the effects of telemedicine on economic development. The research approach adopted was qualitative, utilising a qualitative descriptive design through semi-structured interviews with 17 healthcare providers involved in the provision of telemedicine. The findings indicate that telemedicine reduces the effective distance, in both geographic and temporal terms, between remote facilities and medical expertise; it helps make decisions faster and based on more information, enables proper management at the site level, and assists in better targeting of referrals and medical evacuations. Moreover, it provides an opportunity for healthcare

workers to learn and build confidence. All these effects are contingent, though, on access to reliable communication and power supply, sufficient staffing, working equipment, and the availability of medicines and other factors. In economic terms, the use of telemedicine can result in reduced travel costs and opportunity costs for households, more effective use of scarce expert and public-sector personnel, and increased health and human capital for patients and healthcare workers, respectively. Further, the interview data were analysed using thematic analysis, which involved systematically reviewing and coding the interview transcripts to identify recurring patterns across participants' experiences. Codes were compared and organised into broader themes reflecting the principal factors influencing the use and effectiveness of telemedicine in hinterland healthcare delivery. The analysis generated themes relating to improved access and clinical decision-making, health-system efficiency and resource use, capacity building among health-care workers, and the technological, infrastructural and institutional conditions affecting telemedicine implementation.

Skills in a Transforming Economy: Assessing The Impact of General Education and TVET on Employment Outcomes in Guyana

By Raquel Reid

ABSTRACT

Education is widely acknowledged as a driver of economic growth and social mobility. Higher level of education is frequently linked to better career chances. The relationship between education and labour market outcomes has been a major topic in policy discussions throughout the Caribbean and the wider globe.

For Guyana, it becomes even more pivotal, given the country's macroeconomic transitions presently taking place. Although the unemployment rate has declined to a record low of 6.8% as a result of the post-oil boom, the domestic labour market is now experiencing significant structural friction. By analyzing how the employment premium of educational attainment has changed structurally over this transition, this research investigates the dynamics between stability and change. The study specifically explores the idea that Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is an essential means of promoting social mobility and labour absorption in developing industries.

The study uses anonymized individual-level microdata from the Guyana Labour Force Survey (GLFS) covering two significant time periods – 2019 (pre-crude extraction baseline) and 2024 (the peak of the expansion era), and employs a quantitative methodology. Based on the highest level of education acquired, a binary logit regression model is used to assess the changes in the probability of an individual's employment status. The model accounts for important socio-demographic and geographic factors, such as age, sex, and administrative region.

The results of this empirical research, which show whether Guyana's rapid economic transformation favours local skills acquisition (TVET) or exacerbates already existing inequities across regional and gendered lines, directly add to Caribbean sociological discourse regarding structural stratification.

In the end, this study offers data-driven policy insights into coordinating national industrial policies with human capital development to promote fair, long lasting social transformation.

Keywords: TVET, Employment Probability, Guyana, Labour Force Survey, Structural Economic Transition, Logit Regression.

Digital Transformation, Cultural Identity and Creative Agency in the Caribbean

By Phillip Clarke

Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated digital transformation across the Caribbean, deepening the integration of digital technologies into cultural production, communication, governance and economic activity. Coupled with advances in artificial intelligence (AI), automation and data-driven systems, this transformation presents significant opportunities for innovation and development. However, it also raises concerns about inequality, cultural vulnerability and the future of creative labour. This paper employs a Cultural Studies perspective to examine the implications of digital transformation for Caribbean identities, cultural practices and creative industries within a postcolonial context. Drawing on the work of Stuart Hall and contemporary scholarship on digital culture, the paper explores how digital technologies are reshaping cultural representation, knowledge production and social interaction in the region. Particular attention is given to persistent digital divides based on geography, class and access to technological resources, as well as the implications of AI and algorithmic systems for cultural expression, intellectual property and employment within the creative economy. The paper also highlights opportunities created by digital platforms for the preservation and promotion of Caribbean cultural heritage, the expansion of creative entrepreneurship and the strengthening of transnational cultural networks. It argues that digital technologies are not merely technical tools but sites of cultural negotiation where questions of identity, power and representation are continually contested. The study concludes that achieving inclusive digital development in the Caribbean requires a balanced approach that embraces technological innovation while safeguarding cultural diversity, digital rights and social protection. Such an approach is essential if Caribbean societies are to harness the benefits of digital transformation while maintaining cultural sovereignty and creative agency in an increasingly interconnected world.

A Sociology of Children in the News Before, During and After the COVID – 19 Pandemic in Jamaica

By Aldrie Henry-Lee, Toni-Marie Cornwall, and Joshua Allen (The University of the West Indies, Mona)

Abstract

News Items are products of social processes in the society. While media personnel make a subjective selection of what makes news, their reports are based on events and social interactions taking place in their societies. This paper examines “children in the news” before, during and the pandemic. The relevance of current sociological theories of news production is critically analysed. The research questions are as follows:

1. How does the media portray children?
2. What were the themes of the news on children during and after the pandemic?
3. Are there synergies between the news and children’s publicly expressed views?
4. How can the news be used to change the narrative about children and childhood?

The methodology was mainly qualitative. A content analysis of the news items in two major Jamaican newspapers; The Observer and the Gleaner between 2015 and February 2025) was carried out. Additionally, a content analysis of the papers presented by Jamaican secondary school children at the Annual Caribbean Child Research Conference (2020-2025) was also conducted.

The analysis of the data revealed that in the news, children are generally presented as victims and persons lacking agency. The data from the Child conference provides evidence that children are active participants and interpreters of their realities.

Three major themes emerged from the news: Anguish, loss (for example educational, mental deterioration) and violence. Much focus has been placed on the loss of learning due to the transition to remote teaching. Less than 10 percent of the news featured stories of how children and their families were successfully coping during the pandemic. The themes are compared during the different waves of the pandemic. Mental health issues gained prominence as children returned to school; Physical violence against children was prominent during the curfews and shut-downs. Reports of violence by children increased significantly when schools reopened. The paper ends with suggestions on how the media can bring about transformative change in the quality of lives of Jamaican children.

Food Insecurity to Community Resilience: Globalization, Climate Change, and Community Wellness in Societies in Transition

By Cassandra Carter

Abstract

Climate change and globalization are rapidly transforming contemporary food systems, disproportionately exposing Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in the Caribbean to heightened ecological and economic vulnerabilities. While approximately 733 million people experienced hunger globally in 2023, Caribbean nations face distinct systemic shocks, where climate-related disasters intersect with high dependencies on food imports. These intersecting crises reflect a broader societal transition characterized by environmental risk, economic interdependence, and shifting patterns of local social organization.

Grounded in Ulrich Beck's Risk Society Theory, this paper examines how global environmental risks are unevenly distributed, exacerbating structural inequities in peripheral and semi-peripheral regions. World-Systems Theory clarifies how the Caribbean's historical and contemporary position in global markets leaves it vulnerable to supply chain disruptions, while Social Capital Theory illuminates how localized networks foster community resilience and adaptive capacity.

At the micro-level, this presentation analyzes how grassroots health and wellness initiatives ranging from local food security efforts to community fitness spaces like Zumba function as vital sites of social connection, collective efficacy, and resource sharing. We discuss how these spaces are not merely recreational; they are informal institutional mechanisms that strengthen social ties, support mental and physical health, and mitigate economic and environmental instability. Ultimately, this paper positions food insecurity and community wellness as deeply intertwined sociological phenomena, offering insight into how transitional Caribbean societies maintain social cohesion amid accelerating global transformation.

"An Expectation of Difference": Knowledge Creation through Disability in the Caribbean

By Ruth Rodney (York University), Kendra-Ann Pitt (The University of the West Indies, STA), Rosemarie Ramitt (Guyana Council of Persons with Disabilities), Rachel Taylor (The University of the West Indies, STA), Salima Bacchus-Hinds (Independent Gender Specialist and Researcher)

Abstract

With the growing influence of neoliberal projects, there has been a hyperfocus on competition and productivity as metrics of success, marginalizing researchers and research in university contexts which do not conform to these logics. As sites of learning, labour and knowledge production, university spaces have also been critiqued for their exclusionary practices grounded in interlocking systems of colonial, ableist, and gendered oppression. Specifically, approaches to research in such spaces have been deemed extractive and exploitative. In the context of disability, this has dominantly been articulated

as persons with disabilities being situated as objects rather than as creators of knowledge.

This round-table panel emerges from a Caribbean research project, ‘Women with Disabilities, Gender and Violence.’ Drawing on the reflections of the project team—comprised of disabled and non-disabled, Caribbean and diasporic, community and university-based women—the panel will explore the possibilities of mobilizing disability justice, decolonial and Caribbean feminist frameworks for creating research spaces that challenge ableist and exclusionary practices that characterize academia. In particular, we explore the themes of community, care and time as central factors to establishing and engaging in research processes that grapple with attempts to enact equitable research praxis. We propose these themes as entry points for resistance to the colonial and ableist frameworks that characterize research projects in neoliberal university contexts. We will discuss the potential opportunities to intentionally create spaces where varying body/minds are valued and can contribute to knowledge production in meaningful ways.

Sustainable Development Goals:

SDG 4: Quality Education, Target 4.5 Eliminate Disparities and Ensure Equity

SDG 5 Gender Equality, Target 5.2 Violence Against Women

SDG 10 Reduced Inequalities, Target 10.2 Social and Political Inclusion

SDG 16 Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions, Target 16.1 Reduce all forms of violence, Target 16.3 Access to Justice

AI Governance Dependency: Rethinking Dependency Theory in the Age of Artificial Intelligence

By Livingston Smith (University College of Cayman Islands)

Abstract

Artificial intelligence is rapidly transforming economies, institutions, governance, and everyday social life across the globe. While many advanced economies have responded with comprehensive legislative and regulatory frameworks, most Caribbean states remain at an early stage of developing the institutional and legislative capacity required to govern artificial intelligence. This paper argues that artificial intelligence governance represents an emerging dimension of dependency, in which developing states increasingly import not only technology, but also the legal, ethical, and institutional frameworks through which that technology is governed.

Drawing upon Dependency Theory and World Systems Theory, the paper proposes the concept of AI Governance Dependency to describe the structural condition in which states lacking sufficient legislative, regulatory, technical, and institutional capacity become reliant upon externally developed AI governance frameworks. While such regulatory borrowing may accelerate policy development and provide immediate governance mechanisms, it also raises important sociological questions concerning sovereignty, democratic participation, cultural relevance, institutional autonomy, innovation, and the reproduction of global inequalities in the digital age.

The paper contends that classical Dependency Theory must now be extended beyond its traditional concern with economic, technological, and financial dependence to include regulatory dependence as an emerging feature of twenty-first-century global relations. As artificial intelligence increasingly shapes economic activity, education, healthcare, public administration, security, and social interaction, the capacity to determine how AI is governed may become as strategically important as the capacity to develop the technology itself. Consequently, societies that remain dependent upon externally generated regulatory models risk reproducing new forms of digital inequality and diminished policy autonomy.

Using the Caribbean as a region undergoing rapid digital transition, the paper develops a conceptual framework for understanding AI Governance Dependency and argues that strengthening indigenous legislative capacity, regional collaboration, and locally informed governance frameworks will be essential if Caribbean societies are to exercise meaningful digital sovereignty. In doing so, the paper seeks to extend contemporary sociological theory by identifying AI governance as a new frontier of dependency in the emerging global digital order.

Artificial Intelligence, Digital Capital, and Educational Inequality: Reimagining Assessment for Caribbean Higher Education in a Time of Digital Transition

Oral Robinson

Abstract

As Caribbean higher education undergoes rapid digital transformation, generative artificial intelligence (AI) presents both opportunities for educational innovation and risks of reproducing existing social inequalities. While AI has the potential to expand access to knowledge and strengthen regional educational integration, its benefits may be mediated by students' unequal access to digital capital: the technological resources, digital literacy, and institutional supports required to effectively engage AI-enabled learning. This paper situates Open-Book, Open-Web (OBOW) assessment within broader sociological debates on digital transition and educational inequality, asking how assessment practices can promote equitable learning while maintaining academic integrity in an AI-driven era. Drawing on a mixed-methods study of 539 undergraduate sociology students enrolled in three Canadian university courses that transitioned from traditional closed-book to OBOW examinations, the study examines how AI-era assessment shapes student engagement and learning across diverse social locations. Findings indicate that students overwhelmingly valued the shift from memorization toward critical analysis, synthesis, and application, reporting deeper engagement with course material and reduced examination anxiety. However, emerging data indicates that the opportunities afforded by AI-supported assessment may be unevenly distributed according to students'

digital capital. Rather than viewing AI as merely a technological disruption, this paper argues that it represents a critical moment in the digital transition of higher education. Drawing lessons from the Canadian context, it considers how Caribbean universities can design inclusive assessment practices that leverage AI to foster critical thinking, reduce educational inequalities, and support the development of a more equitable and socially just regional knowledge society.

The Resource Curse Revisited: Caribbean Intellectual Perspectives on Oil Development and the Future of Small States

By Livingston Smith (University College of Cayman Islands)

Abstract

The discovery of commercially viable petroleum reserves has emerged as one of the most significant and contested developments in the contemporary Caribbean. While many view oil as an unprecedented opportunity to accelerate economic growth and national development, others have cautioned that it may expose small states to what has become known as the "resource curse"—a condition in which natural resource wealth contributes to institutional decline, corruption, economic dependency, and weakened democratic governance. Among the most influential Caribbean voices advancing this perspective are Guyanese political sociologist Percy C. Hintzen and Jamaican economist Damien King, both of whom have argued that the long-term costs of petroleum extraction may outweigh its potential benefits.

This paper critically examines these perspectives within the broader literature on political economy, postcolonial governance, and development sociology. While acknowledging the important contribution that the resource curse thesis has made in highlighting the vulnerabilities associated with extractive economies, the paper argues that neither prosperity nor failure is an inevitable consequence of resource abundance. Rather, the developmental trajectory of resource-rich societies is shaped by the quality of their institutions, the strength of democratic governance, the effectiveness of public policy, and the capacity of political leadership to manage national resources in the public interest.

Drawing principally upon the experience of Guyana, while considering the wider Caribbean context, the paper proposes an alternative sociological framework that views petroleum not as either a curse or a guarantee of prosperity, but as a strategic national resource whose ultimate impact is contingent upon the social, political, and institutional choices made by the society itself. In doing so, the paper seeks to contribute to the ongoing Caribbean conversation by moving beyond deterministic interpretations of resource wealth toward a more balanced understanding of development, governance, and national transformation.

Societies in Transition, Violence in Continuity: Professional African Guyanese Women's Experiences of Gender-Based Violence

By Paulette Henry & Chelsey Halley Crawford (University of Guyana)

Abstract

Research Question

Has Guyana's political and socio-economic transition, marked by rapid economic growth and institutional reform, translated into meaningful improvements in the safety, protection, and access to justice of professional African Guyanese women, or does gender-based violence (GBV) persist as a structural continuity of national progress?

Methodology

Using qualitative document analysis of policy documents, judicial records, media reports, and scholarly literature, this paper examines GBV against professional African Guyanese women through the lenses of Black Feminist Thought, Intersectionality, and Structural Violence Theory. It explores how race, gender, class, professional status, and historical marginalisation interact to reproduce violence amid political, institutional, and socio-economic transformation.

Key Findings and Theoretical Contributions

The analysis demonstrates that despite rapid economic expansion and institutional reform, entrenched patriarchal relations, racialised inequalities, and normative expectations of respectability and professional competence continue to shape the conditions under which professional African Guyanese women experience gender-based violence. Rather than disrupting these structural dynamics, societal transition has coexisted with their persistence. Violence is sustained through cultures of silence, heightened reputational risks, and the paradox of professional status, whereby women's proximity to institutional power increases rather than diminishes the personal and occupational costs of disclosure. The findings suggest that political and socio-economic transition does not automatically produce gender justice. Instead, the paper argues that economic and institutional transformation can coexist with the continuity of structural violence, revealing that national progress is measured not only by development gains but also by its capacity to dismantle entrenched systems of gendered and racialised inequality.

Policy Implications and Relevance to Sustainable Development Goals

The paper concludes that meaningful societal transition requires addressing the structural conditions that sustain GBV, rather than relying solely on economic growth or institutional reform. It recommends intersectional policy and institutional responses to advance gender justice in Guyana, with implications for SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions).

Keywords: African Guyanese Professional women; gender-based violence; intersectionality; structural violence; political transition; Guyana; Caribbean

Negotiating Citizenship and Institutional Trust: Police Legitimacy and LGBTQI+ Experiences in Trinidad and Tobago

By Russel S. Mason

Abstract

Caribbean societies are undergoing significant social transformations as evolving understandings of citizenship, human rights, and social inclusion reshape public institutions and expectations of state accountability. These transformations are notably evident in evolving relationships between state institutions and historically marginalized populations, including LGBTQI+ communities. As Caribbean societies continue to negotiate changing understandings of citizenship, equality, and state accountability, understanding how trust in public institutions is constructed and contested has become increasingly important. Despite these societal shifts, empirical research on police legitimacy and public trust in public institutions in Caribbean contexts remains limited. This doctoral study fills this gap by investigating how police officers and LGBTQI+ individuals regard criminal victimization, personal safety, policing, and legitimacy in Trinidad and Tobago, and how these perceptions reveal broader processes of social transition shaping relationships between citizens and the state.

The study adopts a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design. Quantitative surveys will first be administered to police officers and LGBTQI+ individuals to examine patterns of victimization, perceptions of safety, trust in policing, and willingness to engage with the criminal justice system. Semi-structured interviews will subsequently explore participants' lived experiences, yielding deeper insight into the meanings attached to policing, legitimacy, and trust in public institutions. Quantitative data will be analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics, while qualitative data will undergo thematic analysis. Both datasets will then be integrated to provide a comprehensive understanding of police–community relations within a changing Caribbean society.

As data collection is pending ethical approval, no empirical findings are presented. Instead, this paper outlines the study's conceptual framework, methodological design, and anticipated contribution to Caribbean sociological scholarship. The research is expected to advance debates on citizenship, inclusion, institutional legitimacy, and state–society relations in postcolonial contexts while informing evidence-based policy and strengthening just access to justice and public trust across the Caribbean.

How Do Artificial Intelligence Applications Affect the Roles, Responsibilities, and Professional Development of Legal Support Staff in the Legal Profession in Trinidad and Tobago?

By Tavornna Nelson

Abstract

The world at large has been experiencing a dynamic shift with the use of generative and narrow artificial intelligence (AI) tools, software, and applications. The professional workforce in Trinidad and Tobago (T&T), among others, continues to experience improvements in resource savings, streamlined processes, online collaboration, and increased efficiency. There is no doubt that the development of AI has catapulted various aspects of life, including education, healthcare, and global economies. Nevertheless, the power behind these automated technologies has also impacted the legal arena, signaling significant implications for society at large, especially because AI usage is yet to be regulated in T&T. Notwithstanding this, the field continues to witness rapid changes and ongoing research in areas of AI governance, explainability, and ethics, with considerable attention being given to lawyers and judges. However, little to no attention has been extended to understanding how AI affects legal support staff in T&T. This paper therefore hypothesizes that the use of AI, especially in its current unregulated state, presents many pitfalls that will inevitably alter the roles and responsibilities of legal support staff in T&T. This research will adopt an empirical approach to understanding the phenomenon, specifically by using interview schedules to gather data.

Keywords: Artificial intelligence, legal profession, legal support staff and Trinidad and Tobago.

“The Sociology of Security: Cybersecurity - Good on Paper but not good in Practice:”

By Audrey E. Benn (University of Guyana)

Abstract

Security as a phenomenon has come to occupy increasing social energy and thus merits sociological attention. Although security is important to national and local life, it has not been the subject of much discourse and theorising. Further, Departments of Sociology hire scholars who study crime, law, deviance and social control, but they do not place

much attention on security. This is not to say that security and risks related problems have not been important challenges always, especially in the field of sociology. However, since the industry of security has grown in relation to the increasing levels of threats across the globe. Cybercrimes, conflicts, terrorism, organized crimes are problems to be addressed by both government and private companies. The rapid development of digital technologies which are engines of growth, creativity and innovation, paradoxically pose one of the greatest threat to national security and economic stability. This paper explores the significant effects of cybercrimes, and offers protective strategies of protection. It provides an overview of cyber regulations, lists the various kinds of cyber-attacks and security, and analyses the state of cyber security.

Keywords: Cybersecurity, security, technologies, development, cybercrimes, security