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Everybody Have to Eat: Politics and Governance in Trinidad

Gabrielle Jamela Hosein
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to first thank University College London for offering a Graduate School scholarship that enabled me to study full time for three years of my Ph.D. programme. Second, I would like to thank Professor Daniel Miller for his excellent supervision and conscientious advice over the last five years. Professor Miller’s (apparently) total confidence that I knew what I was doing, even when I didn’t think so, allowed me to learn to trust my instincts and the unfolding process of ethnography. I know he hoped that a student from Trinidad would be really into liming, and this was the only thing that I think ever caused him disappointment. I would also like to thank my second supervisor, Mukulika Banerjee, for much needed theoretical guidance. Anna Pertierra, who began my programme with me and who became my flatmate in London, also offered me impressively sensible advice and critical reflection throughout our friendship, inspiring me in many ways. To many others at UCL who gave advice and friendship, I thank you.

In Trinidad and Tobago, the list is much longer. Jennifer Doughty introduced me to many people and provided pivotal help when I was now beginning fieldwork in San Fernando. The women and men living or working on the King’s Wharf and Railway Line, especially Claudette, Joanna, Alison and Stacy, also offered me their friendship, stories and trust. I continue to be humbled by the lessons they taught me about living cooperatively with others and surviving against great odds. In the San Fernando Central Market, the vendors who chatted with me as they sold on Mucurapo Road also gave me a greater appreciation for those who work long hours in agriculture and marketing, and the kinds of sacrifices this occupation involves. Some women and men treated me like family, and I am especially grateful to Merle, Jenny, Miss Catherine, Sandra, Sally and Jessie. The whole Jagessar family, Lionel, Rose, Lisa, Larry and Junior, also treated me like one of their own at the mas camp.

At the San Fernando Jama Masjid, Waheed Majid, probably against his better judgment, allowed me to attend campaign meetings while Mehrun and Pappy Ahmed generously let me live in their family house for almost a year. One sunny day, Sadiq Baksh took me around the city showing me important streets and areas I might not have known otherwise. The women of the YWMA were welcoming and willing to let me attend their meetings, and were always very warm with me, like new found aunts in San Fernando. Raziah Ahmed played a pivotal role in my research by enabling me to attend the ASJA election and gather an invaluable understanding of governance at a community level. Of the many people who let me into their homes and gave me their time and support, Ronnie Bissessar, and the members of the San Fernando South Rotary Club, deserve especial mention. Ronnie enabled me to meet people I could not otherwise access and I greatly appreciate his generosity. I am also grateful to the many people who agreed to interviews and chats as well as Bernadine Maynard who provided minutes of San Fernando Carnival Committee meetings.

I have also benefited from many informal supervisors. Lloyd Best inspired some of my early questions, was often available to talk and was genuinely interested in my progress. In many ways, this study reflects the anthropological pursuit of ideas and questions
stimulated by his articles. Professor Selwyn Ryan has been an advisor, friend and critical listener over many years. His contributions to scholarship on Trinidadian politics also provided a springboard for many of my insights, critiques and explorations. At the Centre for Gender and Development Studies, University of the West Indies, St Augustine - virtually my second home - Professor Patricia Mohammed and Professor Rhoda Reddock continually encouraged me in directions I hadn’t considered, and provided counsel that I often needed. The staff at the Centre gave me invaluable encouragement and helped create times when I could run home to write. Angela Cropper, Novak George, Kevin Baldeosingh and Brinsley Samaroo also gave me great advice in our brief talks. Novak was especially responsible for me first going to the Jagessar mas camp. The library staff in the West Indiana Section of the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine also helped me immensely as I gathered materials during breaks from fieldwork.

Many friends have tolerated, encouraged and kept me sane over these past years. In London, Kendra Pitt, Attillah Springer and Andre Baugh often made sure that I didn’t stress too much. Nicola Cross’ support and love was, what can only be called, relentless. Her daily questions, concern and attempts to schedule thesis time into my life contributed greatly to this study. Her father, Ulric Cross, provided me with a ‘study’ when I needed one and checked up on me during laundry visits to his apartment. Catherine Ali’s friendship and assistance during final fieldwork stages was also invaluable. Antonio Donawa and Fiaz Junior Mohammed provided unbelievable amounts of tech support. All but the last chapter of this study were written on Antonio’s computers and he deserves huge thanks for his rescue whenever I needed it. Though their engagement was brief, Anu Lakhan and Aaron Greer provided essential, much needed advice while Tracy Assing’s excellent maps sidestepped a lot of last minute pressure. Speaking of last minute pressure, much thanks to Gabrielle Henderson, Tracy and Nicola – they know why.

Among my family, my cousin Brian Khan let me stay at his apartment for three months when I first came to live in the city. He introduced me to the President of the San Fernando Jama Masjid and gave me a place to be at home when I still knew no one. My aunt and uncle Famida and Alan Brewer also called me every week to find out how I was managing and if I was eating enough while in London. On my father’s side, my uncle and aunt Imran and Aisha Hosein looked out for me in San Fernando, again often and wonderfully with food. My aunt, Taimmoon Stewart, provided unending personal and scholarly guidance over the last ten years, and remains an inspiration. My dad, Azad Hosein’s many reminders that he was planning to attend my graduation were also encouraging. My mother, Patricia Khan, probably has invested more in this thesis and my life than anyone, and I thank her for her unwavering support and love. Lyndon Livingstone lived with all my preoccupied moments and gave me endless encouragement, food, music, feedback, inspiration and patience. He was unfailingly upbeat whenever I despaired about paragraphs, pages and chapters, and was next to me as I made each step. Finally, I find myself turning to my younger sisters, especially Danielle and Giselle. They inspired me more than anyone else to do what I had to do no matter what, to get on with life, and to appreciate my family more than I had before. This thesis is dedicated to my family because I didn’t realise before this study just how important they are and how much they all contribute to the personal and intellectual paths I continue to take.
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This ethnography examines Trinidadian politics by exploring everyday forms of participation in authority and what they signal about governance of public life. It first delves into the relationships, values and actions that most matter to ordinary women and men. More specifically, it looks at the ways male and female market vendors, Carnival masqueraders, illegal squatters and religious leaders manage and engage with others, ideas, things, spaces, processes, institutions and habits. It then examines how these inform their participation in informal, formal and state-centred aspects of public life.

I argue that Trinidadian politics is grounded in the taken-for-granted norms of informal social life or lore. Lore is crucially significant to deepening analysis of those state institutions, rules and practices, or law, typically studied in political scholarship. In fact, the ways formal processes of state and government actually work can hardly be understood without a grounded understanding of informal social life.

This study, therefore, examines the relationship between lore and law and, at another tier, the interaction between social politics and a legal politics. It explores the values, practices and negotiations associated with sociality, and the dispositions that articulate them. These dispositions reach across and engage ideas connected to legality as well. They create habitual and homologous ways of expressing, participating in and negotiating authority. They give life to what is considered desirable and legitimate, and become the basis for women and men’s participation in governance.

Together, they inform an approach to authority defined by values of reasonableness and advantage. People refer to these when legitimizing how they make sense of the world. This is exemplified in the ways that vendors and police enforce legislation, party activists and squatters depend on patronage, women and men participate in associational life, and Carnival masqueraders and local governmental officials compete to lead a national event.

In each instance, and comparing them, I explore what matters to individuals and groups and what kinds of authority, including emotions, family, need, God, and gender, weigh in on the moment. Such styles of legitimization point to an aesthetic that normatively orders overlapping individual, social and state-centred ways of doing things. Aesthetic authority is, therefore, the basis for my approach to everyday, lived aspects of governance in Trinidad.

KEYWORDS: Politics, Governance, Authority, Informality, Public Life, Gender, Trinidad and Tobago.
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<td>ASJA</td>
<td>Anjuman Sunnat al Jamaat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEPEP</td>
<td>Community Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEWD</td>
<td>Development and Environmental Works Division</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAMDEVCO</td>
<td>The National Agricultural Marketing and Development Corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ETP</td>
<td>Employment and Training Programme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAR</td>
<td>National Alliance for Reconstruction and Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>PNM</td>
<td>People's National Movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTSC</td>
<td>Public Transport Service Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCC</td>
<td>San Fernando Carnival Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>SWMCOL</td>
<td>Solid Waste Management Company Ltd.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIA</td>
<td>Tackveeyatul Islamic Association.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TML</td>
<td>Trinidad Muslim League</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNC</td>
<td>United National Congress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>URP</td>
<td>Unemployment Relief Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>YWMA</td>
<td>Young Women’s Muslim Association</td>
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### GLOSSARY

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<td>Allah</td>
<td>Arabic word for God.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bacchanal</td>
<td>Scandal, quarreling, partying, noisy confusion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baigan</td>
<td>The popularly used Hindi word for eggplant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baiya</td>
<td>Arabic for vote.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bandana</td>
<td>A type of green leaf used for seasoning food.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodi</td>
<td>The popularly used Hindi word for green string beans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boldface</td>
<td>To be pushy, wrong and strong, to defy convention and courtesy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buff</td>
<td>To chide.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calaloo</td>
<td>A soup or stew made with dasheen leaves, coconut, ochroes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caroni</td>
<td>The plains of Central Trinidad.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chutney</td>
<td>Indo-Trinidadian folk music.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commess</td>
<td>Confusion or chaos.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crocus bag</td>
<td>A bag made from burlap, usually holding flour or rice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cut eye</td>
<td>A menacing side glance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dotish</td>
<td>To be stupid or dense.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dougla</td>
<td>A person of Indian and African ancestry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dua</td>
<td>Islamic invocations of God, prayers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eid ul Fitr</td>
<td>Islamic holiday marking the end of Ramadan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farine</td>
<td>Dried, grated cassava.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fas</td>
<td>To be inquisitive or mind others’ business.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fatwa</td>
<td>A legal pronouncement in Islam made by a mufti, a scholar capable of issuing judgments on Sharia (Islamic law).</td>
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<td>Islamic jurisprudence.</td>
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<td>Fishing.</td>
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<td>Haram</td>
<td>Polluting, bad, corrupted, evil.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hijab</td>
<td>Islamic head or face covering associated with morality, piety and morality.</td>
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<td>Hajj</td>
<td>The holy pilgrimage to Mecca.</td>
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<td>Haji, Hajin</td>
<td>Men and women to make the pilgrimage to Mecca.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hosay</td>
<td>Shia Muslim remembrance of Muharram, and the death of the Prophet Muhammad’s grandsons Hussein and Hasan, in Trinidad.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iftar</td>
<td>The evening meal for breaking the daily fast during the month of Ramadan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imam</td>
<td>Islamic spiritual leader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Itjehad</td>
<td>Arabic for independent reasoning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jama Masjid</td>
<td>The main mosque or the main gathering place for Muslims from different areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamaat</td>
<td>Community or group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jinx</td>
<td>Evil spell.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jouvay</td>
<td>The opening Monday morning of Carnival, or Jour Overt, usually celebrated by masqueraders wearing mud and paint or making political commentary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jumbie</td>
<td>A spirit or ghost.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Definition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khutbah</td>
<td>Arabic for speech, address or sermon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kicksy</td>
<td>Funny or jokey.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuchoor</td>
<td>The popularly used Hindi word for confusion or bacchanal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kufr</td>
<td>Arabic word referring to someone who does not recognize or believe in Allah, or is corrupt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Langniappe</td>
<td>A little extra added on.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lime</td>
<td>To hang out or to socialize.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maktab</td>
<td>Islamic school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maljo</td>
<td>Evil eye, from the French mal yeux</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mas</td>
<td>Masquerade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mas Camp</td>
<td>A place where costumes for Carnival masqueraders are made.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masjid</td>
<td>Place of Islamic worship, also called a mosque.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maulana</td>
<td>Title preceding the name of a respected religious leader, especially a graduate of a religious institution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mouloud</td>
<td>Festival and birthday of the Prophet Muhammed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Namaaz</td>
<td>Prayers, used collectively made on Fridays at the masjid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nani</td>
<td>The popularly used Hindi word for grandmother.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ochro</td>
<td>Ochra.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pancho</td>
<td>Shawl.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papelona</td>
<td>Raw sugar.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pawpaw</td>
<td>Papaya.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picong</td>
<td>To heckle or cleverly tease someone to their face.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pirogue</td>
<td>An open fishing boat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play Whe</td>
<td>A state-controlled gambling game of Chinese origin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>A citrus fruit like a Mandarin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puja</td>
<td>Hindu prayer ceremony.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purdah</td>
<td>Literally meaning &quot;curtain&quot;. It is the practice of preventing men from seeing women. This takes two forms: physical segregation of the sexes and requiring women to cover their bodies so as to cover their skin and conceal their form.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qasida</td>
<td>A form of poetry from pre-Islamic Arabia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qur’an</td>
<td>Islamic holy text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharia</td>
<td>The code of law based on the Qur’an.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shilling</td>
<td>Twenty-five cents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sita</td>
<td>Sita and Rama are the model wife and husband in the Hindu tradition. Sita is also regarded as an avatar of the goddess Lakshmi, the consort of the God Vishnu.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soca</td>
<td>Local party music derived from African and Indian rhythms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sousou</td>
<td>A group of people contributing to cooperative savings. Each draws from the total in turn.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steups</td>
<td>To such one’s teeth in annoyance or disbelief.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunnah</td>
<td>From the Arabic Sunna. The way of life prescribed as normative in Islam, based on the teachings and practices of Muhammad and on exegesis of the Koran. Also called hadith.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surah</td>
<td>Chapter of the Qur’an.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweet talk</td>
<td>Flirtatious lyrics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tantie</td>
<td>A loosely used term meaning older family friend, blood relative of mother or father, or older woman.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tafsir</td>
<td>The science of explanation and interpretation of the Qur’an.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Definition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasajo</td>
<td>Dried beef.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ten days</td>
<td>Short term unemployment relief work provided by the Unemployment Relief Programme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tief</td>
<td>To steal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional mas</td>
<td>Masquerade costumes that reproduce historically played characters every year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ulema</td>
<td>Muslim scholars trained in Islam and Islamic law.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Umma</td>
<td>The Islamic community.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter One: Introduction

The new generation wishes to advance not simply from proletarian agitation and violence to expert negotiation by technically competent and confident cadres: it wishes to become the proprietors of the landscape and governors of the dew. (Lloyd Best 2001, 3)

Figure 1: View from a Taxi Driving Up High Street

1.1 Introduction

Driving to San Fernando, a taxi weaves its way across highways, over hills and through backroads. Passing street vendors, stores, homes and workers walking home, it slowly climbs the High Street and stops at the top. Here, at this city’s busiest corner and most central point, it breathes out travelers from all over Trinidad.

It’s late afternoon and, right there, dozens are standing in front of the Kentucky Fried Chicken outlet waiting to take a taxi to other parts of San Fernando. Private cars illegally used as taxis provide the most regular transport available. Today, most avoid stopping because of the police car stationed at the corner to deter this informal business. Some take a chance and stop around the corner anyway. Minutes after the police car rolls away,
however, normalcy resumes. Everyone seems relieved and there are small scrambles to crowd into taxis as they pull up. Many travelling seem like mothers hustling home from work and secondary school students unwillingly leaving their friends. On the other side of the street, a group of four men stand around surveying the action. One of them hails his friend who has stopped his taxi in the middle of the road, blocking cars behind while passengers rush in. Another, with a handkerchief version of Trinidad and Tobago’s flag hanging out of his back pocket, has just returned with beers he has “sponsored” for everyone. He is complaining that he doesn’t know anyone who can help him get an apartment being built by the government at the base of Naparima Hill. Taking his beer, the third assures him not to worry because his cousin knows someone. An older man, walking by, says he is on his way to the steelpan1 yard for a meeting and the fourth decides to follow.

In this typical scene of everyday life in San Fernando, women and men are enjoying the sociality of the moment. The police, as state representatives, remind everyone that illegal practices are not acceptable. Yet, they know that they may be widely accepted by ordinary people. Others feel close to symbols of the nation, such as the flag’s colours, but lack enough connections to government offices and benefits. In return for friendly generosity, those with political networks, such as cousins or partners, share what they have. Still others are part of organizing a community defined by skill, income and, in this instance, commitment to music considered distinctly Trinidian.

The tributaries leading from this captured moment connect women and men to family, culture, work, friendship, God and habitual ways of doing things. Undulating above and below the surface, there are crisscrossing rules, competing legalities, institutional powers, emotions and different kinds of status. There are also notions of fairness, morality and equality. Small encounters, such as these, are the stuff of politics, especially politics of the everyday. They are pivotal for appreciating how ordinary women and men participate in public life and engage with authority. From this standpoint, the study seeks to

1 Steelpans are Trinidian musical instruments made out of oil drums. A steelpan yard is a community space where an orchestra of steelpans are housed and rehearsals held.
understand governance, not as an abstract entity but as part and parcel of everyday life. This corner at the top of High Street therefore exemplifies a starting point for examining negotiations over participation and authority as they occur just off the streets of San Fernando.

Like those disembarking from legal and illegal taxis, this study therefore puts its feet to the ground at this junction. Then, in the following pages, it turns right and meanders down Mucurapo Street; passing first a large, covered market and then a green-domed masjid. Turning right again, it moves down Sutton Street, past a mas camp with music drifting from a dark interior. At the bottom of the street, it turns right and follows Independence Avenue (once known as Broadway) to the city's wharf. Both unique and ordinary, each site can be easily seen but also remain unnoticed while walking San Fernando's busy streets. Delving into the small community living by the sea and, then, making a loop in front of a few men still selling fish in the afternoon, this study returns to the top High Street, and begins to reflect on three questions. How do Trinidadian women and men experience, participate in and negotiate authority? How does their participation create or undermine normative order? What does it reveal about governance of public life?

Why ask these particular questions? I first explain what I mean by participation and why this is an important starting point. Second, I outline what authority means, how negotiations work and why they matter. Third, I discuss why order is significant. This first section introduces the writings of Michel de Certeau, Pierre Bourdie, Yael Navaro-Yashin and Lisa Douglass as part of the discussion. Finally, I outline what I mean by governance and how this study is centred in public life. Overall, it illuminates why these questions reach to the core of politics and what politics means in this study.

2 Though also called a "mosque", ASJA members use the word "masjid".
3 Like many streets in San Fernando, this one was named after a Governor of the colony. J.H.T. Manners-Sutton was Governor of the colony from 1864 to 1866.
4 As I discuss in the next chapter, a place where Carnival masquerade or "mas" costumes are produced. In the study, I refer to the artists, friends, neighbours, family members and Carnival masquerade players who make Carnival costumes as "mas makers".
Political anthropology has consistently emphasized the value of ethnographic immersion in everyday life (Willis and Trondman 2002). This is because anthropology is committed to observing and understanding politics from the perspective of its participation and its consequences, not just its form. Ethnography is not simply about naming organizing concepts or “arranging abstract entities into unified patterns” (Geertz 1993, 17). It pays attention to women and men’s actual lives in order to plumb the “informal logic” in their interpretation of rules, habits and practices. Anthropological studies, therefore, attend to the minutiae of human culture, emotions and experiences as well as vocabularies that express “the symbolic dimensions of social action” (ibid, 30).

French sociologist Michel de Certeau’s (1984) writing on everyday life, particularly his concepts of ‘strategies’ and ‘tactics’, has shaped how scholars understand the roles of culture, power and symbol (Shields 1991, Featherstone and Lash 1999, During 2000, Mitchell 2007, Napolitano and Pratten 2007). For de Certeau, strategies refer to the ways that the powerful impose, organize, regulate and maneuver order. Whether governments,
corporations or individuals, these authorities are backed by control of science, laws, language, discourse, resources and goods. In contrast, tactics refers to the ways that those with less power to set the rules appropriate, recombine and reinterpret them in new ways. Tactics are not necessarily ideologically consistent, but are slippery, subversive, makeshift, unstable and even temporary responses to necessity. They give an appearance of conformity while making rules “habitable” by actively engaging their legitimacy, meanings and definition of order.

De Certeau’s approach has influenced perspectives on domination, accommodation and, especially, resistance. The concept of resistance has long been used to understand organized and informal hegemonic and counter hegemonic practices. Particularly from the 1980s, feminist and cultural studies’ attention to micropolitics of domination, subversion and transgression dovetailed with “the Foucauldian project of exploring power in all of its variations, valences, and subterfuges” (Brown 1996, 730). Concern with finding rebellion and resistance everywhere especially mushroomed as revolutionary metanarratives, such as Marxism, lost steam (Abu-Lughod 1990, Ortner 1995). Following James Scott’s (1985) influential writings, work on everyday resistance highlighted how complicated, contradictory, ambivalent and even collaborative it can be (Abu-Lughod 1986, Stoler 1985, Scott and Kerkvliet 1986, White 1986, Ong 1987).

Walking about the streets of San Fernando, I found that this oft-used concept did not help nuance or explain what seemed to be going on. Fieldwork led me to be interested in the way that women and men claimed private and public spaces as well as those different kinds of power associated with the state and social life. What stood out were not attempts to overly reject authority, but to reproduce, mimic, appropriate and invest it with new relations and meanings. Groups traditionally considered to be disempowered, including women, the popular classes and the landless were simply not overwhelmingly concerned with resistance. This reinforced my skepticism both that “the powerless” had mainly “arts” or “weapons” of “the weak” (Scott 1985, 1990) and that this concept should define the lens of our looking glass.
This is not to say that their assertions of agency did not seek to challenge stratification and inequality. Yet, as Sherry Ortner notes, "resisters are doing more than simply opposing domination, more than simply producing a virtually mechanical reaction...They have their own politics" (1995, 176-7). From the point of view of what most matters to the women and men in this study, blanket readings therefore overdetermine and skew the intricate meanings of their participation in forms of power. In his brief essay, "On Resisting Resistance" Micheal Brown also concludes, "A myopic focus on resistance, then, can easily blind us to zones of complicity and, for that matter, sui generis creativity" (1996, 734). Instead, our goal should be to see women and men's social worlds, and its frictions and tensions, in ways that make sense to them.

My analysis therefore seeks to illuminate how "human beings use their emotional, intellectual, aesthetic and material resources to thrive in a range of social settings" (ibid, 734). This means not reducing women's and men's lives to conflict, but also attending to complicity, cooperation, reciprocity and altruism. It also means being ethnographically thick about the internal politics of dominated groups, their cultural richness and the intentions, desires, fears and projects of those involved (Ortner 1995, 190). As I waited for taxis, bought vegetables, listened to business transactions, attended women's meetings or just sat with fishermen at the waterfront, people's appropriation of authority and its meanings stood out. Overall, therefore, I primarily detail aspects of power not often connected to some of Trinidad and Tobago's most peripheralised groups and the surprising ways ordinary women and men govern normative order.

De Certeau suggests we attend to "the true, though veiled, mastery with which the inhabitants of a neighbourhood manage their own ascendency over their environment and the discreet, though tenacious, way in which they insinuate themselves into public space in order to appropriate it for themselves" (1998, 23). This study observes moments of resistance for the relations they reveal. Yet, in writing about Trinidadian participation, it is these social practices of appropriation that are my focus. My own argument is that informal social life offers much more than "weapons of the weak" (Scott 1985). In fact,

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5 Emphasis in original
“weapons” which really empower women and men emerge from everyday, ordinary assertions of what matters.

Plucking from de Certeau the way one picks leaves of seasoning from backyard plants, I argue that what I call social politics is the basis for such appropriation. Social politics describes women and men’s reflective and active use of the overlap and interrelatedness of spaces, considered private and public, to express selfhood and power. As I later discuss, the sites magnified here all intersect public and private dimensions, and show how these become sources of power in everyday life. Social politics is grounded in more privatized, everyday concerns with, for example, food, family, friendship and faith. These inform “ways of operating”, “styles of action” and tactics (Giard 1998, xxiii) that enable women and men to impose their “own law on the external order of the city” (de Certeau 1998, 13). In other words, political life on the ‘outside’ is organized from the ‘inside’ (ibid, 22). How does this work?

De Certeau argues that everyday life is organized in terms of visible and repetitive behaviours, and their expected symbolic benefits. In a neighbourhood, women and men access these benefits by behaving well in the eyes of their peers. This means learning “an art of coexisting” with others who share and use, or “consume”, similar space (1998, 8). De Certeau calls people’s investment of commonly held ideas regarding behaviour, “propriety” (ibid, 8). This investment in propriety is connected to values and practices considered customary.

Propriety is a locally-rooted cultural practice that enables women and men to recognize themselves in a space, to be recognized by others, to be part of social relations and, therefore, to be respected, well-liked or cared about. Like Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of habitus, it is not always explicitly articulated, but works in habitual, taken for granted ways. In de Certeau’s words, “it is a more or less coherent and fluid assemblage of elements that are concrete and everyday…or ideological…at once coming from tradition…and reactualized from day to day across behaviours” (ibid, 9).
Neighbourhoods are spaces where women and men have such daily routines and favorite
routes or often cross each other's path. Less anonymous than the larger city, everyday
use gives neighbourhoods more personal meaning and makes them "private,
partialized space" (ibid, 9). Through their patterns, engagements and familiarity,
individuals and groups create a connection from what is going on in their more intimate
spaces to this more public outside. Not merely functional, this is an incredibly social
process of appropriation. Thus, for de Certeau, "the neighbourhood can be considered as
the progressive privatization of public space" (ibid, 11).

I argue that a social politics works similarly. It emerges from consensus shaped by
habitation. It appropriates public life on the basis of practices, desires and ideals centred
in families and other networks. This politics expresses the value of relationships and
reciprocity, livelihood and survival, and feeling good about oneself. It links consumption
and production to relationship, including the relationship to God. It symbolically
manages, often through group and individual self-regulation, how women and men live,
work and cooperate with each other. As de Certeau notes, "The field of the symbolic is
“equivalently” that of the “cultural rule,” of the internal regulation of behaviors as the
effect of a heritage (emotional, political, economic, etc.)...From the subject’s point of
view, propriety rests on an internal legislation...” (ibid, 18).

Everyday concerns are not simply the context for a social politics. They additionally
invest it with its own informal legitimacy. This is a legitimacy emerging from the
conventions of informal social life or what I call lore. Lore is that sphere of everyday life
“where the most powerful legitimization of the social contract is born” (ibid, 23). For de
Certeau, the norms of language and behaviour that are part of “tacit collective
convention” create obligations to participate in a “collective public” (ibid, 16). However,
it is not only that accepted ways of being, in intimate and public spaces, are the basis for
participation. It is also that lore is a source of extremely diffused power6. Habitation to

6 As I detail in Chapter Five’s discussion of aesthetic authority, this power has vertical and horizontal
dimensions.
its requirements enables women and men to appropriate, privatise and poeticise public space, and to exercise authority. It is also differentiated, for example, lore affords men different powers than women. Additionally, as I show, it infuses more than simply 'tactics' or arts of the weak. It is, in fact, powerful enough to attract surprising kinds of individuals and groups.

For de Certeau, propriety is governed by ideals of "mediocritas" or "moderation". This seeks the "least amount of deviation" and "greatest participation in the standardization of behaviours" (ibid, 180). This idea seems applicable to the settings in San Fernando. However, here, I suggest that moderation is more defined by common sense notions of reasonableness and excess or 'advantage'. Their meanings flex and shift even as they play the same governing purpose. Like propriety, they work as a "reality principle" (ibid, 21) establishing what is allowable or what goes too far. As de Certeau writes, the "everyday face of "public morality"" is not dogmatic, but "a practical morality more or less integrated into the heritage of social behaviours that we all practice" (ibid, 28). What is considered reasonable is not fixed, but advantage typically marks it outer edges.

Significantly, a social politics also intersects what I call a legal politics. This second kind of politics is centred in concerns about leadership, rules and office. It primarily emerges from formal spheres of power or what I call law as opposed to lore. Women and men progressively privatise legal politics just as they do public spaces like neighbourhoods. Their practices flow through, twisting, stretching, redefining and claiming its powers, roles, status and meanings. This is how they make this term embrace both the colloquial sense of legality, or what people consider to be fair, as well as what is enshrined in abstract, formal or state rules. In other words, social politics presents a competing and coalescing legality.

7 In de Certeau's words, "The city, in the strongest sense, is "poeticized" by the subject: the subject has refabricated it for his or her own use by undoing the constraints of the urban apparatus and, as a consumer of space, imposes his or her own law on the external order of the city....urban space becomes not only the object of knowledge, but the place of recognition." (1998, 13) Emphasis in original.
As I argue below, this has profound implications for the ways that authority is legitimised. In this study, one of the things I pay attention to is the skill and style with which women and men negotiate and navigate\(^8\) different kinds of politics and different approaches to authority. A kind of virtuosity is needed to participate in the everyday social environment of lore and law, and both ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ aspects of political life. It is analogous to the skill needed to play All Fours, a Trinidadian card game requiring shrewd assessment of odds, strategy, partnership, familiarity with rules, secrecy, cheating if you can get away with it, but penalties if you don’t, publicly recorded winning points and a lot of crosstalk. As de Certeau writes, “To be “proper,” one must know how to play “whoever loses wins,”” to defer benefits and to submit to a “general decree of what ought to be done” (ibid, 22). In other words, people should not “believe that they are allowed everything” (ibid, 28).

Even where there are “active reversals of supposedly coherent values” (ibid, 33), I show in later chapters how propriety does not necessarily lose its hold. The compromises, claims and contestations I highlight emphasise many people’s unwillingness to “risk disappearing into the worrisome world of anomie, into perversion, or into the codes of various social pathologies” (ibid, 34). Law and lore are normative, though in different ways. They are the ways that women and men’s everyday moral values become expressed. Essentially, they comprise the boundaries of what people think they and others should be allowed or prevented from getting away with.

This study observes the practices and relationships of those selling vegetables, meeting women in their religious groups, making art or living on the waterfront in order to thresh the especial significance of lore. In the next chapter, I shift the spotlight to each of the study’s settings so that the significance of these activities can become clearer. The

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\(^8\) My definition of negotiation and navigation comes from my M.Phil Thesis on Indo-Trinidadian girlhood (Hosein 2004). Negotiation involves agency and engagement with rules and expected roles of various kinds. Women and men negotiate, but they are also able (and to some extent compelled) to move among and ‘choose’ from a range of multiple and competing prescriptions and demands. This is a continual process of finding the balance of identities and practices ‘appropriate’ to different spaces and situations. Therefore, I examine the ways that women and men navigate different ideals as well as negotiate the expectations of each.
chapter introduces historical and ethnographic context, and reviews the international, regional and national literature relevant to each site, its groups and key issues. In focusing on governance of public life in San Fernando, it is these women and men’s relationships, their blurring of state-society distinctions, and their negotiation of an overall politics of authority that this study explores. In this way, I ethnographically investigate conceptions of governance as involving persuasion, coordination and collective decision-making rather than simply domination. I also build on traditional understandings of authority as the capacity to act and to make decisions, as well as the right to do so (Hague and Harrop 2004, 6 and 13).

1.2.1 Centering Informal Politics: Lore and Law

In centering informal politics, I begin with ideals and their diffuse effects. These ideals are expressed through dispositions that guide what Trinidadians, including state actors, want and do. As I describe further in Chapter 3’s more detailed discussion of habitus, dispositions refer to the internalised beliefs and practices of a group (Bourdieu 1977 [1972]). I argue that dispositions are widely considered to be legitimate if they make sense or are reasonable, but not if they excessively take advantage of others. Once seen as legitimate, dispositions have autonomous authority and do not need the support of office or rules.

As I show in Chapter 4, this is what explains bandleaders’ confidence in San Fernando Carnival Committee meetings. In fact, any single Trinidadian woman or man may have comparable legitimate authority if these dispositions justify it as reasonable or sensible. While at times they put brakes on the stretch and strength of state authority, these dispositions complement, engage and even compete with official authority in a variety of ways. Lore and law flow through each other. Caught in the current, different kinds of power and different reasons for idealizing participation in public life twist and combine.
In this sense, I start with normativity, or ideals of order and balance, as the basis for governance. These engagements highlight the importance of understanding what matters, how women and men make what matters count, and the necessity of playing the tension between formality and informality skilfully. It is for this reason that this study examines the analogies among illegal practices, formally legitimized practices such as elections, informally legitimized practices such as patronage, and practices, fed by ideals such as nationalism, that pull formal and informal legitimacy together. It is also why my focus on 'public life' leaves state and society tangled. I do not approach them as bounded and homogenous, nor separate and opposed (Navaro-Yashin 2002). Rather, the people in this study highlight that there are no clear boundaries between informal and formal spheres, values and practices. In Trinidadian women and men's lives, national government, local government, and economic, cultural, religious or residential groups appear as different publics that overlap and are gradations of each other.

In order to explore these gradations, I peel away the layers of correspondence among different catchments. For example, I examine market vendors in relation to the San Fernando City Police, mas makers in relation to the San Fernando Carnival Committee and squatters in relation to higher-ranking political party activists. I also discuss all these in relation to the San Fernando Jama Masjid. This latter site, like a foil to the others, comprises its own formalized bureaucracy and informal negotiations. I look at the extent to which, and ways that, conclusions drawn in relation to various levels of 'the official' are also relevant to 'the popular'.

These catchments, while appearing disconnected, together create a picture full of parallels, nuances and reinterpretations of each other. This is what makes them homologous. Market vending highlights the reasoned acceptance of illegality. Meetings with mas makers show nationalism's unexpected effects. Squatters' attempts to get government jobs emphasise the interstitial way patronage functions and elections in the masjid reveal the meanings of enfranchisement. All show the gendered nature of participation and authority. I argue that these, not primarily constitutional and
parliamentary observations, lie at the heart of understanding how citizenship is meaningfully lived.

Yet, a focus on practices and catchments are only outer layers. Reaching deeper, I detail why these practices play out as they do across catchments. Here, normative life provides the heartbeat pushing the flow. It creates an overall order or consensus based on shared customary experience, common sense and (moral) flexibility. Such everyday morality values empathy with others balanced with self-interest and is therefore seen as fundamentally moral. The study is, therefore, grounded in the norms emerging from market vendors', mas makers', squatters' and mosque leaders' lives. Further, it is embedded in the everyday ways these norms spring from what matters, whether concerns are meeting needs, expressing artistry, behaving piously or making and nurturing relationships.

Starting from concerns such as these, I highlight how the dispositions "everybody have to eat", "love for mas", "return to spirituality" and "contacts" express normative life and explain the various meeting points between lore and law. Chapter 3 more fully describes how these dispositions embody moral authority. Chapter 4 then highlights their interplay with formalized rules and processes, and their significance for public life. Chapter 5 slices in from another angle to theorise about their implications for legitimacy and authority.

These values provide the basis for correspondences that cross popular spaces and reach across to official ones. They thickly demonstrate how Trinidadians’ participation in authority mobilizes popular notions of reasonableness in governance of public life, rather than simply abstract political ideals. Reasonableness is not determined only or even primarily by the law or formalized authorities, but by the values underlying lore. This points to a different aesthetic than that officially proposed by state-centred actors, formal
institutions and processes, and sometimes approaches to studying them. As I show in later chapters, these attempts at a different normative order point to under-theorized aspects of relationships among people at different locations across the continuum of public life, in and out of the state. Lore is therefore crucially significant to deepening analysis of those state institutions, rules and practices, or law, typically studied in Trinidadian political scholarship. In fact, the ways formal processes of state and government actually work can hardly be understood without a grounded understanding of informal social life.

At times, lore has greater legitimate authority than law and legitimates the flouting of law. At other times, it reproduces it through individuals' and groups' practices of self-regulation. This is what occurs when some market vendors quarrel about others who give the police too much trouble. Women and men's claiming and twisting of the meanings and intentions of law suggest it has some legitimacy. Such appeals may also aim to buttress their own stance, negotiation or interpretation of what is right and reasonable. This was part of male mosque leaders' election wrangling. At times, law has greater legitimate authority. Yet, I also show how formalized rules and practices engage lore. This may be because officials also agree with the norms of lore, because they must appeal to it to bolster their own authority, or simply because it may make more sense or seem to others more reasonable in a particular instance.

Flowing continuously from intimate through social to state-centred spaces, women and men's appropriations aim to enable them to recognize themselves, their habits, values and meanings in the world around them. Additionally, they aim to feel and be recognized by others, including law, and to create a sphere of public life that recognizes both lore and law. As Chapter 4 shows, negotiations between police and market vendors appear to do just this. Their practices attempt to mitigate the overly abstract and alienating

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9 The concept of the state refers to those aspects of the governing, administrative, and coercive apparatus that have a coherent imposed quality while, nonetheless, being politically negotiated (Hague and Harrop 2004, 7).

10 My perspective here and ideas about the concepts of law and lore have been deeply influenced by many conversations, beginning in 2002, with the late Trinidadian economist Lloyd Best and his analyses regarding Caribbean and Trinidadian society.
consequences of law with norms of sociality and reasonableness. In other words, this popular politics attempts to make public life empathetic to context, moment, relationship, meaning, and necessity. Authority, then, emerges not only as a negative constraint, but also as a positive emphasis on inclusion.

Women and men’s interventions create moments when their selves and ideas can be recognized and express power. The following chapters, therefore, examine the effects of power in terms of exclusion and repression. Yet, equally, they explore how power, mediated by situational context and human agency, produces reality and “rituals of truth” (Foucault 1979, 194). This intersecting result can be seen, for example, in San Fernando Carnival Committee meetings when the Committee asserts its hierarchical status and ultimate authority, yet must align itself with the power of love for mas and seek bandleaders’ complicit recognition of its legitimacy.

1.2.2 Ethnography of Politics

A study of politics that examines lore and law in this way should be ethnographic. Lore emerges when everyday practice comes into potential conflict with other kinds of authority such as law, and is still legitimized. It is in the spaces of popular morality that lore can be encountered as it actually exists in the world. A study of language, letters and speeches would miss aspects of the everyday, the taken for granted, moment-by-moment shifts that define lore. Dispositions, practices, relationships and even identities change meaning and significance depending on how they are framed from situation to situation. Ethnography mimics this acknowledgement of context. Similarly, it fleshes out the top-down gaze of much Trinidadian political analysis.

In exploring politics, this study therefore sketches how authority is negotiated through points of contestation, correspondence and consensus between lore and law. These negotiations shape and are shaped by specific dispositions and overall values of common sense, relationship and reasonableness. They give life to what is considered desirable and legitimate, and become the basis for people’s participation in governance. Rather than
state and elite-centred understandings, this picture highlights the significance of ordinary Trinidadians’ expressions of what matters.

While I more fully sketch aspects of the study’s sites in the next chapter, I would like to link them here to de Certeau’s discussion of the neighbourhood. It is a commonly traversed space appropriated by people whose lives cross each other. He is interested in its use and meanings as well as the connections between the private space of the home and this wider geography. The sites in this study certainly frame a connected, crosscut space. Yet, traversing San Fernando’s hilly streets, I wasn’t interested in the area as a single neighbourhood. Rather, selecting from de Certeau’s approach, I treat each of the sites in this study like its own neighbourhood. The San Fernando Central Market, Lionel Jagessar and Associates Mas Camp, San Fernando Jama Masjid and King’s Wharf squatting community are all ‘crossroads’ or catchments in their own way. Somewhat differently, each is both private and particularised as well as open and accessible to others of the area and city. Each enabled me to see how intimate aspects of living together, consumption, production and worship inform how people appropriate space and express their politics.

As women and men’s politics are not always stated explicitly or are stated incompletely, I examine a combination of words, gestures and explanations. What do these show about Trinidadians’ social exchanges, and ways of living, using and transforming cultural messages? De Certeau’s concluding points about the way people do things and relate to one another are useful here. Practices have aesthetic, polemical and ethical aspects. They open up unique and transformational possibilities within imposed orders. They enable people to appropriate knowledge and bend it to their own taste. This creates a “path through the resisting social system” to “overturn the imposing power of the readymade and preorganized” (ibid, 254). Finally, they create “an interval of freedom” or moments when people “defend the autonomy of what comes from [their] own personality” (ibid, 225). In embarking on a study of politics, I therefore start with “ordinary practices, their registers and their combinations” (ibid, 245).
Yet, this study is not only about low-level, informal or micro-politics. It is about the ways that a social politics, grounded in everyday life, reaches up and across a spectrum of ideals, regulations and relationships. Neither is it ultimately about the state, formal power or leadership. Rather, it is about the ways that a legal politics, or ways of doing things centred in rules and office, are experienced in practice across publics. Each kind of politics defines the options involved in appropriating public space. Together, they show how an “art of coexisting” involves complementarity as well as claims, compromises and contestations over propriety. Step by step in the chapters that follow, I therefore explore how they interlock lore and law, and create political order.

1.2.3 Centering Authority

Students of political life can choose any of myriad points of entry. This study uses authority as a conceptual lens, governance as the discursive sphere of interaction, and participation as the entry for understanding women and men’s politics. My analysis centres on Trinidadian interactions in spaces saturated with various kinds of authority. These include City Hall, pavements, homes and tea parties. I’ve attempted to explain why a study of political life focuses so centrally on questions of authority. This involves the kinds of power that give Trinidadian women and men of all kinds access to authority and the ways stratification unequally mediates their access. Stratification can be understood, I argue, in terms of unequal capacities to legitimize different expressions of authority. However, as I go on to describe, hegemony doesn’t necessarily work from the top down. Clearly, dominant groups more greatly control how authority is defined and represented. Nonetheless, I show that other kinds of legitimation, such as simply seeing things as reasonable, contradict an elitist view.

This conceptual framework shows that governance of public life is marked by interlock of lore and law. At the heart of this nexus, I show how social politics and legal politics present competing legalities. This clearly suggests that Trinidadian civic ideals are not the abstract ones assumed in western discourses of civil society. In later chapters, I look at how key political concepts such as patronage, nationalism, enfranchisement and
leadership are lived in Trinidad. I suggest that, largely, they gain grounded meaning in terms of their ability to move women and men up and down registers of authority.

How do women and men legitimize the kinds of authority they mobilize in their social encounters? From Chapter 3 onward, I begin to dissemble the forms of power they bring to various situations, and their meanings. These forms of power make their claims to authority and definitions of what matters seem reasonable and sensible. Women and men can access a diverse range of such forms. For example, they may be grounded in institutions, occupation, income, family, gender, religion, colour, ‘race’, sport, individual style, emotion and relationship or ‘who you know’. Taking such a perspective of power, Daniel Miller describes “boldfacedness” in Trinidad as a “dogged assertion of freedom” (1993, 11). He describes an “occasion when a Trinidadian is refusing to acknowledge a complaint, or is blithely ignoring the queue that has built up to pay for some goods” in terms of “the ‘style’ with which such behaviour may be carried out”. This style is “the manner by which they display their studied indifference to the pained ‘looks’ of those who have patiently queued and the ‘cool’ with which they assert their transcendence of social norms” (ibid, 6). In response, he notes, women or men may steups\(^{11}\) or pull a face.

Alternately, as Lisa Douglass writes of Jamaica, “When anthropologists discuss power, they may speak of individuals, a social class, or the state. When Jamaicans discuss power, they speak in terms of family” (1992, 1). CLR James’ analysis of cricket crafts it as its own autonomous field of activity with its own notions of power and legitimacy. Speaking of players taking bribes, he says, “‘it isn’t cricket’ to sell a game at baseball or basketball or whatever the game may be” (1983, 247). Here, he shows “a specific logic and historical tendency...not simply pre-scripted by economics” (Smith 2006, 109). As an aesthetic, cricket itself offers surprising possibilities for “alternative values, freedom and even defiance” (ibid, 110) both on and off the physical field.

\(^{11}\) A steups is an irritated or annoyed sucking of teeth.
Drawing on the work of Yael Navaro-Yashin (2002) and Lisa Douglass (1992), I want to especially highlight affect or sentiment as “forms of both power and meaning” (ibid, 3)\(^\text{12}\). They deeply resonate with the power and meaning of dispositions such as *everybody have to eat, love for mas, return to spirituality* and *contacts*. These dispositions also illuminate how affect infuses and mediates social hierarchy, reproducing categories of distinction. Chapters 3 and 6, in particular, examine how sentiment informs social politics whereas Chapters 4 and 5 pay closer attention to the ways it shapes negotiations with state officials and legal politics. All widen an aperture, allowing politics to be spotted in a sense of hurt because of unfairness or elation from success in a standoff against dominance.

For Navaro-Yashin, it is fantasy and cynicism that are common and ordinary ways of being political and managing state power in public life. To understand how these work, she focuses on humor, rumor, imaginary stories, panic and irrational fears rather than rational, consciously articulated views and explanations (2002, 4-5). Cynicism, for example, enables Turkish women and men to critique their alienation from the state and clearly see it as a farce. Yet, because they proceed cynically or *as if* corruption, fakeness and inefficiency don’t characterise the Turkish state, they enable its continual regeneration and recycling in everyday life.

Whether because of statism or survival, Navaro-Yashin argues, jokes, anxieties, pleasures, fears and sadness entangle people in entrenching the fantasy of the state. As she writes, “In what I would like to call its visceral (habitual, psychic, phantasmatic) effects on subjects of a political culture, is located an important and tangible site for ethnography. It is in the physicality of the political that the state attains an effect” (ibid, 181). Navaro-Yashin’s perspective usefully highlights that participation in politics cannot be entirely explained with arguments about discourse, deconstruction, ideology or false consciousness. For her, because “the political” is both available and not available at a conscious level, “consciously articulated narratives...are only partially revealing” (ibid, 15). Attention to affect and emotional states, as key to how power and meaning are managed, is therefore necessary.

\(^{12}\) Emphasis in original.
Closer to home, Douglass' study of sentiment in White Jamaican families highlights its intersection with both structures and practices of kinship and those of power. The ideology of family is associated with a diffuse affinity, love, devotion, caring, trust and togetherness. On the one hand, these elusive and enduring feelings about others are part of daily life. On the other, they are also connected to particular orders of value, meaning and social relations (1992, 3). This means that sentiment also gains power and meaning through the significance of family name and ancestry, elite privilege and economic success, and social networks.

In other words, principles of distinction (Bourdieu 1984) and hierarchy such as gender, class and colour shape how women and men constitute, organise, practice and invest meaning in family (ibid, 1). Family gives sentiment its authority, legitimizes social differences, hierarchically classifies some over others and reproduces forms of domination. As Douglass describes, "I view gender, colour, and class not as descriptions of particular groups or persons, but as categories that act as principles of distinction...Principles of distinction serve both as analytic and as commonsense categories that inform the way Jamaicans relate to one another and affect the way they explain and experience the world" (1992, 10-12).

Douglass defines sentiment as "historically derived and culturally meaningful embodied experience" (1992, 18). It has meaning in terms of love, loyalty, unity and distinction. It is related to power because of the ways it legitimizes social hierarchy. Yet, more fundamentally, it is both powerful and a source of power in its own right because of the cultural meanings invested in it. Douglass' approach is useful for moving beyond sentiment as simply sociological construct (Lutz and Abu-Lughod 1990), sphere of meaning (Rosaldo 1980), ideological practice (Lutz 1988), methodological lens (Rosaldo 1989) or instrumental tool for material gain (Medick and Sabean 1988). Like Navaro-Yashin, Douglass is concerned that an emphasis on ideas, consciously articulated discourses and ideologies misses why women and men really do things and misreads the frequent disjuncture between thought and action. As Douglass writes,
Ideology, when considered only as a type of cognition or consciousness (or its lack), fails to detect the moral content, the emotional effects, and the appraisal of values involved in social life. In social processes, including ideological processes, thought, practice, and sentiment come into play...They do so in ways that may be either mutually reinforcing or contradictory. Sentiment may reinforce or disengage the hegemonic power of ideas and practices. (1992, 20)

Strikingly, both Navaro-Yashin and Douglass reach similar conclusions about what Douglass calls “ruling sentiments” (ibid, 20). Conscious deconstruction of material and ideological power “may not be enough to change practices or to transcend the moral power of sentiment” writes Douglass (ibid, 21). Rather, we should acknowledge that various forms of affect have hegemonic power because they are “meaningful and of value in their own right” (ibid, 21).

This suggests that we should attend to the meaning and value that different groups of women and men attribute to various forms of sentiment. It is on this basis that this study explores the power and meaning of key dispositions emerging from lore. It is also why the emotions that they signal, such as love, empathy and feelings of togetherness as well as disappointment, frustration and fear, are seen as expressions of and ways of engaging moral and political power.

Like sentiment, sources of power such as need, God, style, institutional clout or ‘who you know’, are hierarchically organised. Firstly, this is because women and men of various groups have differential and unequal access to them. Second, this hierarchy reflects the greater or lesser degree of authority associated with different kinds of power. In other words, like gender or class, these powers mark social stratification. Third, women and men’s differential access influences the extent to which legitimacies they offer are accepted or seen as reasonable. Finally, it shapes the meanings that women and men can claim, twist and resist when they do assert one kind of power or another. As Douglass puts it, “A person’s ideology is not determined by class position alone, for within every class there are other status differences and many varieties of experience” (ibid, 18).
Nonetheless, as I show, everyone tries to access all forms of legitimacy regardless of their status or resources. For example, despite its institutional monopoly over Carnival, the San Fernando Carnival Committee relies on the informal value “love for mas” to justify its authority. Looking up, female leaders in the masjid engage in Quranic interpretations even when they may not have the male authority to do so because ‘correct’ spirituality is so important. In these actions, women and men move up and down register where different kinds of legitimacy have varying levels of influence. Examining legitimacy, therefore, offers a way of understanding how stratification and power inequalities play out and how people play them with ‘style’.

Authority therefore operates as a hierarchical register. Individuals and groups attempt to access from unequal positions because they lost an election, know a generous patron personally or because of their gender. These positions and their meanings, combinations and effects are not static. Where women and men can enter the register changes depending on the context. In fact, the whole hierarchical register of authority itself is not stable. For example, institutions have different amounts of legitimacy depending on the situation. Even the Prime Minister may have to be a “true true Trini” (Eriksen 1992) in one instance, but not another. What can be done with this legitimacy, how it can be made to matter and even where it is on the hierarchy are all negotiated and shifting constantly.

While, here, I don’t fully engage Trinidadian analyst Lloyd Best’s influential reading of Trinidad politics, the study critically responds to his work. For example, Best argued that Trinidadians society, formed through the economically-driven transplanting of colonized people from many places, is classless. There is stratification, ranking, hierarchy and status, differences in occupation and wealth. However, for Best, class is associated with “a concept of responsibility”. He felt, “The thing about the Caribbean is that everybody has the same responsibility, which is no responsibility at all” (2001, 11)! Best was referring to a colonial history of absentee ownership, the lack of an indigenous capitalist class, and the effects of “proletarianisation” on the people brought to the region to labour. In his view, no one seemed to feel they owned the place and everyone was only concerned with what was theirs. Yet, no one accepted that anyone is better than her or him, and no one accepted being on the bottom. He described this situation as if “everybody in Trinidad is a second-class citizen, with no first and no third” (ibid, 11), and felt it was the reason government was dominated by a “maximum leader” style Prime Minister, who as an incarnation of a colonial Governor, was the only one really making decisions. Best felt that “proletarian conceptions” defined women and men’s relationship to nation and state.

However, this ethnography highlights a very different slice of reality. As I show, the ways all Trinidadians participate in claiming authority and devising bases for legitimacy suggest modes of asserting responsibility that don’t necessarily fit colonial, Weberian or Marxist ideal types. If a proletarian ethos is seen as including concerns grounded in labour, needs, dignity and relationship, then it can be considered a basis for the social politics emerging from lore and treated as central to understanding governance in this study.
Additionally, different powers engage each other. Institutions may treat gender or colour as irrelevant or vulgar forms. Yet, they speak back, possibly putting down institutional power as too unfeeling or intellectual to fit common sense. In other words, there are competing ways of representing these powers so that those lower on the scale don't always lose. A group lower down may frame a discourse in a way that gives them legitimacy. It may make them feel that they are right and those above them are wrong, but it may not have any effect on the situation. Instead, this device expresses how they continue to make sense of the world and, even, keep their self-respect. In this sense, it is how they make what matters to them part of the integrity of their actions and values. As Chapter 6 shows, return to spirituality filtered through the masjid election in just this way.

Conceptualising authority along a varying register enables me to explain how access is strongly mediated by both inter and intra group differences such as religion and gender. As Aisha Khan observes, "In most colonial societies, economic and social boundaries are made to correspond with racial, ethnic, religious, and other communal groups that are differently incorporated into the stratification system of society" (2004, 9). Yet, by defining authority in terms of the power of family, need, knowledge, God, relationships and emotions as well as the power of more traditional markers such as gender and institutional location, I also treat it as a 'tactic' (de Certeau 1984) that women and men invest with meaning.

Popular participation in this hierarchical register is exactly how order is both created and undermined. It gives form to an aesthetic or overall approach to normative life in which an array of women and men participate from different social positions. What this shows is that politics is far less about formal leadership, rules and office than it is about normative life or what most matters. This is what I call aesthetic authority. A significant body of global and local feminist scholarship documents this almost "personal is political" interpretation (Hanich 1971, Smith 1987, Jaggar and Bordo 1989, Stanley and Wise 1990, Reddock 1994, Wolf 1996, Ribbins and Edwards 1998, McClaurin 2001).
Chapter 5 further describes the significance of this concept in terms of legitimacy and authority.

The following pages somewhat surprisingly describe ordinary women and men’s hegemony over public engagement with authority. There are, of course, divergent political stakes. Yet, both women and men act discursively to “reshape the very ideas and institutions that make it possible for them to act as subjects” (Tsing 2002, 334). They act ideologically to articulate a system of meanings, values and beliefs that can be abstracted as a “worldview” and drawn upon for “collective symbolic production” (Comaroff and Comaroff 2002, 210). Finally, they draw on culture for the hegemonic forms it enables them to cast and resist.

Only partly following Gramsci, I therefore show their power “to control the cultural terms in which the world is ordered and, within it, power legitimized” (Comaroff and Comaroff 2002, 11). By contrast, as I show in Chapters 4 and 5, bureaucracy, legislation, high-ranking politicians and abstract civic values are far from dominant. Reflecting on Jamaica, Obika Gray has similarly written of the power of the urban poor’s rebellious cultures to define statecraft and party politics, pose problems for political legitimacy and challenge obedience to law and official morality (2004, 2).

In the panoramic view this framework offers, national elections, parliaments, political parties and constitutions appear as only some specific, and not necessarily hegemonic, bases for legitimization - among many. As I outline below, international and regional discourses disproportionately magnify these catchments, their main participants, and their actions and ideals as the master symbols of politics. This study therefore contributes to

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14 Jean and John Comaroff discuss culture as “the shared repertoire of practices, symbols, and meanings from which hegemonic forms are cast - and, by extension, resisted. Or, in other words, it is the historically situated field of signifiers, at once material and symbolic, in which occur the dialectics of domination and resistance, the making and breaking of consensus...” (2002, 208).

15 Gray’s thesis is that Jamaican statecraft now involves the straddling of conflicting political values, such as formal-constitutional and the covert-illegal, because of a decisive shift in the social balance of power from the respectable middle class to the urban poor.
social and political anthropology through an emphasis on aesthetic authority as lived in the ordinary ongoings of public life.

1.3 Politics in International Perspective

I became interested in these connections when noticing the gaps created by state- and elite-centred understandings of Trinidadian and international politics and governance. I was especially keen to focus on under-studied aspects of authority, and the ways it is democratized. Relatedly, I was interested in the ways informality and participation are lived, mobilized and given meaning. Recent political anthropology offers a variety of approaches to understanding negotiations over authority. Margins, sovereignty, spaces of exception and biopolitics have emerged as dominant conceptual themes.

I survey them briefly here to outline the conceptual framework presented by the international literature. I also summarise Partha Chatterjee's concept of a "political society" (2005, 84). Finally, I discuss how the intersections of social life and 'the state', so central to this study, have been conceptualized. However, I return to these as part of a fuller discussion in the concluding chapter where I review my own engagement and contribution to this scholarship.

1.3.1 Margins and Sovereignties

In the last section, I culled a definition of the kind of politics central to this study from de Certeau's writing about neighbourhood sociality. This set the context for understanding informal spaces and relationships, and their connections to the state. However, these can also be examined in terms of 'margins'. In their introduction to Anthropology in the Margins of the State, Veena Das and Deborah Poole define these margins as "sites of disorder, where the state has been unable to impose its order" (ibid, 8). On the one hand, this means that these are sites where "the state is constantly refounding its modes of order
and lawmaking” (2004, 6) so that “unruly subjects” are transformed into disciplined ones. On the other, they highlight moments when “law and other state practices are colonized by other forms of regulation that emanate from the pressing needs of populations to secure political and economic survival” (ibid, 8).

They argue that, to focus on margins of the state is to examine technologies of power that pacify through violence or pedagogy, the legibility and illegibility of state documents and the ways that life, health and bodies are normalized, neglected or negated. In other words, it is in the recesses of everyday life where the state is constantly being formed (ibid, 23). It is important to keep in mind that the practices that take place in and define margins are both “outside and inside the law” because the state and its representatives may simultaneously behave in licit and illicit ways. As well, authorities that are not state-defined may control governance and may even do it in ways that mimic state signifiers. This is the case in countries experiencing civil war where non-state authorities compete with the state to control territory, people, trade and violence.

In this literature, although local worlds are enmeshed unequally with the state, margins are both peripheral to and central to how the state defines itself and works. This is because states define their own qualities and scope in opposition to margins, use margins to indirectly rule, and create margins as an exercise of power. More relevant for this study, margins signal the pluralisation of disciplinary, regulatory and enforcement practices (ibid, 4). As the authors write, “the complexity of lived experience inflects notions of justice and law with different kinds of imaginaries from those available in official sites and representations of justice and law” (ibid, 22). This conceptualization has obvious relevance for how the informal sites and practices in this study can be framed. It also introduces the notion of sovereignty to my own examination of how those within lore and law exercise authority.

Drawing on Giorgio Agamben (1998), Hansen and Stepputat (2005, 1) define sovereignty in relation to “the ability and the will to employ overwhelming violence and to decide on life and death”. It is both an effect and objective of state formation. Yet, it is not limited
to states, but dispersed throughout and across societies. Sovereign bodies include states, nations, communities, leaders and individuals. In other words, any woman or man or any group can exercise sovereignty that competes with that of the state. This points to possible, continual tensions between popular (individual) sovereignty and that of nations and states. Essentially, sovereign power lies behind authority, whether this is the authority of law or those acting across or outside its boundaries. It is defined by the power to exclude others, deny their equality as citizens or their rights as humans, and reduce them to 'bare life' (ibid, 17). In such a way, this de facto authority creates “states of exception” or moments when law is suspended.

Postcolonies are cast as “almost permanent zones of “exception”” (ibid, 18) because they were forged on “subjection, order, and obedience through performance of paramount sovereign power and suppression of competing authorities” (ibid, 4). In other words, colonial politics did not aim to create responsible and self-governing citizens. Rather, it denied (liberal-democratic) citizenship to colonial bodies and dealt power through violence. This was part of colonial biopolitics. Biopolitics refers to the way that sovereignty must be performed on bodies through violence as well as management of health and life. It is grounded in what authorities can do to bodies and the ways bodies can resist. Essentially, biopolitics defines which bodies and practices are ‘normal’ and which are exceptions, and what happens in margins (Das and Poole 2004).

Connected to this is Thomas Hansen and Finn Stepputat’s discussion of “informal sovereignty”. This concept describes individuals and groups who challenge state monopoly of violence, control identities and bodies, and arbitrarily flex their authority in the fissures in state power16. In other words, not only states have biopolitical power. The authors’ point is that colonial governance suppressed competing authorities, but led to territories defined by informal sovereignties anyway17. As such, a study of authority

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16 As Hansen and Stepputat define, “They have managed to capture, privatize or make semi-autonomous territories, institutions, identity forms, and practices in the interstices of the fragmented configuration of sovereign power in the modern city-scapes” (2005, 31).
17 This is because the informal sovereign who has become “a law unto himself” provides a reason for states to perform their sovereignty, defend the social order and produce their own legitimacy. Both informal
should recognize how postcolonial states only partially rule habits, norms and bodies. These are, therefore, ideal sites for how exploring how de facto sovereignty should be conceptualized.

For Hansen, “repertoires of authority” are a good starting point. They “are founded on violence, or the threat thereof, but also structure distinct, if morally ambivalent, registers of public and political agency” (ibid, 170). This definition suggests that legitimate political action is defined and justified by shifting norms, and even illegality. Hansen, for example, examines how sovereignty is practiced and justified in the name of law, ‘community’ and ‘big men’ (ibid, 170). The notion of sovereignty furthers rethinking of the relationship between centres and margins. It connects to this study of politics as negotiation among different registers of authority.

Similarly, the notion of repertoires provides a framework defining distinct ways that state power is invoked, mimicked and contested. Overall, these observations to the importance of examining historically produced and lived practices of community, citizenship and belonging (ibid 4-5). They connect to my own interest in the many ways that order is asserted, experienced and negotiated as women and men relate to things, ideas, institutions and others.

A politics of authority that stretches from close-knit to associational and community spaces and into the state clearly invites similar rethinking of the “boundaries between centre and periphery, public and private, legal and illegal” (Das and Poole 2004, 4). It suggests a comparative lens with which to view the dynamics of governance, citizenship and social order. As ethnography can privilege the lived experiences of those often marginalized by political, economic and gender strictures, it offers a unique perspective of how these are negotiated.

sovereigns and (rumours of) corrupt state officials further produce ‘the community’ as “the sovereign repository of moral values and authentic sociality” (Hansen and Stepputat 2005, 32).
Yet, this study departs from some of the recent scholarship on sovereignty (Hansen and Stepputat 2005). I found the discourse about violence and biopolitics distant from the negotiations of market life, mas camp costume production, masjid elections and life in a squatting community. Issues of refugee status and migration, autochthony and aliens, militarism and border conflict just were not relevant to these specific experiences. Informal sovereignty does not work through the management of health, 'bare' life and death in any of these instances.

1.3.2 Political Society

Building on these ideas, Partha Chatterjee provides an extremely helpful concept that can be borrowed for this study. He defines “political society” as the sphere of direct encounter between the state and communities and individuals from “popular” worlds (2005, 24). He examines political society in terms of “the relations between government agencies and population groups that are the targets of government policy” (ibid, 84). These relations are constitutive of democratic politics as “a constantly shifting compromise between the normative values of modernity and the moral assertion of popular demands” (2005, 86). Rather than the ideals and practices of bourgeois “civil society”, this concept describes “pure politics”.

Within this politics, civil-social norms and constitutional proprieties are not certainties, sovereign power has ambiguous legitimacy, and rights and rules seem continuously negotiated afresh (ibid, 99). This results in creative “forms of democratic practice that, even as they retain the names given to them by Western sociology and political theory, have become unrecognizably different” (ibid, 100). Though focused on state-society interventions related to welfare, housing and health, this concept usefully signals a way that the irregular, illegal, informal and seemingly ‘inappropriate’ ways of participating in public life can be named and normalized. This suited my own desire to not ignore nor

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18 Writing of India, Chatterjee defines civil society as “bourgeois society...as an actually existing arena of institutions and practices inhabited by a relatively small section of the people whose social locations can be identified with a fair degree of clarity...as an ideal that continues to energize an interventionist political project...as an actually existing form it is democratically limited...and restricted to a small section of culturally equipped citizens” (2005, 84-86).
pathologise popular ways of doing things for inadequately meeting civil society virtues, relations and practices.

1.3.3 The State


This more current literature neither abandons nor reifies the state. It does not approach 'it' as unitary, discrete or distinct from society, nor as the supreme authority among localized and globalised powers. Rather, it examines how the state comes into being, is differentiated from other institutions, and affects the diffusion of authority throughout society. In this view, the state is a multi-layered, pluri-centred, fluid, fragile, contradictory and culturally specific ensemble (Sharma and Gupta 2006, 10).

Yet, citizens' and officials' everyday practices seem to reify it as the highest authority over social institutions and conduct, and as coherent, singular and legitimate. This is the basis for statism or ways individuals, institutions and communities expand government beyond the state through mundane processes of governance. Therefore, the state can be studied by looking at the play of hegemonic processes in social relations, networks and institutions as well as in banal bureaucratic practices. These can illuminate how women and men imagine, encounter and re-imagine what it does and means (ibid, 11).

By looking at how women and men perceive the state based on their locations and encounters with its processes and officials, it is possible to understand ways that it is
routinely reproduced and contested, represented and limited. On the one hand, this
e ngagement may institute inequalities. On the other, it offers opportunities for subversion
by those outside of bureaucracies as well as at different points within. Both options may
reinforce the line between state and non-state realms, redraw or blur them. As Aradhana
Sharma and Akhil Gupta write, “Cultural struggles determine what a state means to its
people, how it is instantiated in their daily lives, and where its boundaries are drawn”
(2006, 11). This points to the ways that the state is culturally constituted (ibid, 11).

Ethnographies of the state examine its messages and their reception, as well as everyday
bureaucratic interactions. Each shapes how the other is experienced and read by citizens.
State signifiers and effects make the state real, reinforced and resisted in women and
men’s lives. They highlight the centrality of social life to any understanding of
governance, and its bureaucratic, gender, cultural, sociopolitical and everyday
expressions.

As Sharma and Gupta summarise, “How official and non-official groups of people
interact among themselves and with each other might illustrate the concrete ways in
which the distinction between state and non-state arenas and social hierarchies are
mobilized in everyday state practices, what kinds of social capital and power are
associated with this work, and how this official status intersects with and feeds upon
existing, contextually specific social hierarchies” (ibid, 20). This framing is useful for
this study because it points to ways that gender, class and other differences are
operationnalised, challenged, reconstituted and altered (ibid, 20).

It is also useful because it shifts questions of governance from the state to
“governmentality”. This refers to “the direction of conduct toward specific ends, which
has as its objects both individuals and populations and which combines techniques of
domination and discipline with technologies of self-government” (ibid, 24, Foucault
1991). In this view, governance is performed through webs of social institutions and
arrangements. Power is exercised through these horizontal networks that encompass
individual bodies and relationships as well as the state, which sometimes plays a
coordinating role (ibid, 25). For some scholars, this shows the constitutive significance and ubiquity of “statist practices, interactions and representations” (ibid, 27).

Anthropology is presented as particularly suited to this framework because it often adopts a view “from below” (Trouillot 2003, 95) that also pays attention to “the multiple locations in which governmental practices are enacted” (Sharma and Gupta 2006, 32) and is interested in the subjects and identities state effects produce (ibid, 32). This way of understanding how the state is imagined and deployed through interactions among and between bureaucratic officials and citizens closely fits the negotiations I later detail. The concept of “governmentality” is especially relevant because it directs attention to the kinds of governance that do not pivot on the state.

These concepts of margins, sovereignty, political society and the state valuably frame the sites and practices, as well as questions of authority, driving this study. Findings in hand, I return to engage with some of scholarship that applies these ideas in Chapter 7. However, my focus seems distinct from the thematic focus of political anthropological literature. First, this is not a work about the state and its margins. While I explore aspects of how the state actually works, I am more interested in understanding the ordinary practices that constitute informal and state politics.

In a sense, the study centres and works from the “margins” in. I therefore thickly detail women and men’s relationship to different kinds of livelihood and spiritualities, friends and family, leaders, decision-making and conflict resolution. It is precisely these relationships, things, ideas and practices that matter most that have been neglected because of scholars’ concern with government and state. Yet, they have implications for politics, the state and governance.

Certainly, the state is not marginal to any of the social spaces that I discuss. In fact, I highlight ways that “the conceptual boundaries of the state are extended and remade in securing survival or seeking justice in the everyday” (Das and Poole 2004, 21). Far from being ‘outside’, ordinary people’s lives and values encompass and appropriate state
power. Yet, it is not the primary basis for the key political values that this ethnography reveals. It does not wholly permeate the disciplinary practices and reasons for belonging that are illuminated in subsequent chapters. Public life includes, but is not hegemonically defined by, the state. From this view, the state and its effects only sometimes appear relevant to people's personal and political lives.

Literature that assumes all social life to be statist simply because an idea of the state is systematically reproduced, therefore seems presumptive rather than explanatory. As I discuss further in Chapter 7, for ordinary citizens, there is no clear opposition between informal and formal, social and state in Trinidadian political culture. This is because of the ways that authority is established, contested, negotiated, shared and balanced. Yet, it is the privatization of public life that more powerfully emerges from this ethnography.

1.4 Politics in Regional and National Perspective

Figure 3: Politics in the Landscape
Drawing from international anthropological literature, I have so far laid out a framework comprising concepts such as sociality, legality, authority, marginality and informal sovereignty. The following section contextualizes my approach within the regional and national literature on politics. It highlights the gaps that provided a rationale for the study as well as scholarship that I draw upon. I then outline how the study's key concepts can be glimpsed in anthropological literature on Trinidad, and additionally provide a springboard for my own approach and emphases.

Politics and governance in Trinidad and Tobago, and the Anglophone Caribbean, have overwhelmingly and repetitively been studied in terms of elites\textsuperscript{19} and leaders\textsuperscript{20}, elections, representative government and political party development\textsuperscript{21}, constitutional change\textsuperscript{22} and public sector bureaucracy\textsuperscript{23}. Many of these studies have usefully interrogated "the distribution, exercise and consequences of power" (Hay 2002, 3). Yet, they infrequently evaluate assessments of the society made at election periods or at governmental levels against other, non-crisis moments and non-governmental spheres. The study of politics involves much more than the study of the state. It involves also examining ways the state and formal and informal groups, classes and institutions are mutually enmeshed\textsuperscript{24} (Held 1989).

There is an especially clear neglect of the connections and overlap of formality and informality in Trinidadian political culture. This has limited what this scholarship can say about women and men's beliefs about a range of rules, procedures, practices and

\textsuperscript{19} San Fernando's Winston Mahabir (1978) is one of the many political elites whose autobiography contributes to this literature.


relationships. Trinidadian political scientist John La Guerre (2002, 23) summarises governance as,

...the sum of processes, institutions, norms and practices by which a collectivity agrees to govern itself. It accordingly represents the accumulated wisdom of continuing generations of the "living, the dead and the unborn." What legitimates this order is the consensus on which it is based, especially between and among the contesting elites. Yet governance is not only an affair of the elites. The masses must to some extent or at least substantial sections of them, believe that the system on which it is based is legitimate.

Yet, much of Trinidadian politics appears as a top-down exercise. Politics and governance are principally written about as ‘government’, and elite egos, rivalries and styles of leadership (Ryan and Bissessar 2002). The historiography is full of sagas of the formal sphere, struggles among powerful interest groups, parliamentary wrangling, and conflicts between the civil service, state institutions, judiciary and male politicians. Shifting outside of formal politics, other studies are frequently about social movements and, essentially, organised “resistance”.

When informal social life does feature, it is hardly theorized upon. Though a rich and detailed literature exists on Trinidadian politics, it overshadows the feelings and deliberations of ordinary women and men. As Sherry Ortner points out, “The importance of subjects (whether individual actors or social entities) lies not so much in who they are and how they are put together as in the projects that they construct and enact. For it is in the formulation and enactment of these projects that they become and transform who they are, and that they sustain or transform their social and cultural universe” (1995, 188).

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25 Although it is less relevant to my argument here, Carlene Edie’s (1991) criticism that the state is often studied as if disconnected to international conditions and pressures is an important one.

Reading scholarship on Trinidadian political culture, one is often left wondering about the ideals people articulate in their daily lives even as they respond to those of political leaders, parties and organized movements. Partly, this is because a state-society split defines much of this scholarship. In this vein, political analysts commonly make statements emphasizing that, "Constitutional reform lies at the heart" of a "consensual model of democratic governance". This study instead suggests ways that informal social life exemplifies aspects of consensual governance. It highlights the pitfalls of scholarly lip service to who and what appear ‘non-political’.

1.4.1 Feminist Critiques and Approaches

Feminist scholarship has explicitly theorized aspects of life that were historically considered 'non-political' and showed the intersection of spheres considered private and public (Moore 1988, 1994). Historical changes to social manners and domestic relations, for example, can provide a picture of changing ideals regarding public and private space, politics and civil society (Sennett 1978). These evoke the organization of public life itself. The behaviours and issues that arouse passion and are made personal point to moral codes, individual investment in society, and how different groups imagine and regulate themselves and each other. Studies that explore these themes and spaces 'democratise' how politics is conceptualized (Paley 2001).

Anthropological and feminist writing on Trinidad and Tobago has often filled this gap because of an especial interest in the more personal politics of beliefs, social reproduction and domestic life. These literatures also attempt to comb out the knotted implications for governance of social and state relations. For example, Rhoda Reddock’s (1994) Women,

27 Pye (1995, 965) defines political culture as “the sum of the fundamental values, sentiments and knowledge that give form and substance to political processes”. It is the context for shared meanings and solutions, conflict and consensus.
29 This doesn’t imply the absence of elite domination. Rather, consensus is reached in the context of “a rather inchoate set of lived experiences, feelings, and relationships within a political and economic order of domination...in a constant process of construction and reconstruction” (Roseberry 2002, 199).
Labour and Politics analyses electoral, bureaucratic and legislative changes in relation to the sexual division of labour\(^{30}\).

Like Reddock’s study, feminist analysis of politics directs us to ask different questions. Who are the women and men involved? Who exerts authority? What makes it legitimate? How are men and women differentially included in private and public life? What gender ideologies shape power negotiations? How is the personal political? What is politics? Aside from regional and national feminist scholarship, scant attention is given to these questions\(^{31}\).

Elections, government and the state are not neutral choices for study\(^{32}\). Nor are they ideologically neutral practices and spheres of power. Although political analysis often discusses the significance of dualistic notions of ethnicity, class, sexuality and geography, the gendered nature of governance remains largely invisible. As Barbadian feminist writer Eudine Barritteau (1998a, 196) has written, “Caribbean scholars have not questioned whether the state is gendered” and “androcentric” in their focus on these hegemonic practices and spheres. This leaves unquestioned the extent to which the “postcolonial Caribbean state is not only masculinist in its personnel but also in its orientation and policy formulation” (Lewis 2002, 518). It also hides “the ways women’s

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\(^{30}\) Reddock (1994, 2) defines the sexual division of labour as “the differential allocation of tasks, occupations and responsibilities to women and men respectively. For most of human history this has not been an egalitarian relationship but one in which those tasks and responsibilities assigned to women have usually been ascribed lower social, economic and political value than those assigned to men”.

\(^{31}\) In the international scholarship, Barrett 1980, 1985; Cocks 1989; Collins 1990; Delphy 1984; Di Stephano 1990; Flax 1990; Folbre 1991; MacKinnon 1989; Okin 1979; Pateman 1989 have critiqued the androcentrism and misogyny in mainstream Western political theory.

\(^{32}\) As Trinidadian Keith Nurse (2004, 7) has aptly described, masculine values “are taken as the prototype for human behaviour. Masculinism, as the hegemonic ideational construct, achieves a logocentric posture and thus becomes “a pervasive, familiar and powerful narrative by which we organise our understanding of social reality” (Johnson 1991, 153)”. Masculinism is “an ideology which justifies and naturalizes male domination and power, accepts heterosexuality and the existing sexual division of labour as normal, and is resistant to change...” (Reddock, 2004a, xxiii). In relation to these, Barritteau (1998) writes, “To move towards gender neutrality the state must confront the hierarchies created with the construct of the masculine and the feminine....States should recognize the nature of their gender systems in the same way they take stock of their political or economic systems and attempt to address imbalances. If states refuse to do this then state policies are gendered, and will involve gendered power relations”. One could say much the same for scholarship on Trinidadian politics.
economic, political, social and personal activities are perceived and constructed” (Barriteau 1998a, 196) in traditional scholarship.

For this reason, Barriteau (2003c) encourages us to examine the state as a player in gender relations and the way that sexual difference is constructed and valued. Thus, she writes,

We fail to view economic or political relations between women and the state, or men and the state as also relations of gender. Instead discussions of gender are often confined to the private sphere. This reflects a deep seated desire to view relations of gender as outside the scope of a state’s relations with its citizens (1998a, 190).

The concept of gender refers to “complex systems of personal and social relations of power through which women and men are socially created and maintained and through which they gain access to, or are allocated status, power and material resources within society” (Barriteau 2003a, 30). Across the Anglophone Caribbean, feminists have used this concept to highlight women’s political participation, women and men’s differential experience of citizenship, gender bias in governmental policy-making, women’s lower levels of participation in decision-making and electoral leadership, and feminist struggles for inclusion of women’s issues in constitutional reforms. Participating in this literature, Linden Lewis (2000) and Neils Sampath (1993) have theorized the links between nationalist and ethnic identity, citizenship at personal and political levels, and masculinity.

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33 Tsing (2002, 326) accurately refers to it as “an imaginative construct’ and “asymmetric point of divergent positionings”.


Caribbean feminists have also stretched the boundaries of what constitutes 'politics'. Instead, among other foci, they have treated labour force participation, female poverty, gender-based violence, homophobia, the myth of male marginalization, and women's challenges to the sexual division of labour and sexual mores as legitimate arenas for the study of politics. Recent work by Ama Tafari (2006) pulls together several of these themes in connecting the state, politics, community, violence and gender in Jamaica.

The literature raises often overlooked questions about the ideological relations of gender across spheres of power. Regional, feminist scholarship on politics highlights the importance of questioning masculine bias in governance, linking state and society through common underlying gender ideologies, and delving into households, communities and individual lives at all levels. Building on the concept 'the personal is political' (Hanich 1971), this literature challenges public-private sphere distinctions as themselves social constructions used to constitute gender.

Feminist scholarship therefore suggests that customary relationships and practices, forms of authority, neighbourhoods, practices of self-regulation and relationship to God are all

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40 Barriteau (1992, 20-21) exactly describes this when she writes that postmodernist, Caribbean feminist theorizing "is not occupied with questions on why women do not participate in elections as men do, or why women are perceived as less interested in politics than men. That approach clings to explaining women in relation to men. It still maintains a liberal political definition of what is and is not political behaviour. Instead the new theoretical frame shifts center to gendered woman and asks, What do [Caribbean] women consider political? What factors within her environment do women consider more important than mainstream political activities? The theory does not assume that women should be interested in political participation as defined [by men], neither does it assume that women rank, or should rank political participation on a continuum of priorities. The theory allows women to redefine what is politics and political participation. It validates women's approach to the political process. The thrust of this emerging construct is to, "explore aspects of social relations that have been suppressed, unarticulated, or denied within dominant (male) viewpoints" (Flax 1989: 67)". See also Barriteau (1995).


42 Andaiye 2003.

43 Pargass and Clarke 2003.


45 Barriteau 2003b.


48 While "material relations of gender" refers to the way women and men gain access to, or are allocated resources, "ideological relations of gender" describe how society accepts or contests what is appropriate behaviour and entitlement for each sex. It is underscored by stereotypes, biases, blame and basic beliefs in women's subordinate role (Barriteau 2003a).
gendered realities for women and men. As Lisa Douglass observes, “distributions of authority, or legitimate power over oneself and others, and autonomy, or freedom from the control of others, vary by gender, colour, and class. Autonomy and authority are available to men and women in different ways depending on whether they are asserted “inside” the family or “outside” of it” (1992, 254).

In this study, I explore the extent to which gender ideologies regarding work, space, leadership and spirituality explain women and men’s participation in forms and levels of governance. My interest isn’t in proving that the world is gendered, inequitable and patriarchal. Rather, the following chapters interrogate how and when women and men make gender a register of power. I therefore examine when notions of gender are mobilized or gendered behaviour made significant as well as how the contents of gender shift in different instances.

1.4.2 Anthropological Contributions

It is important to briefly situate this study within the anthropological literature on the Anglophone Caribbean region, and especially Trinidad and Tobago. This also provides some background for understanding ethnic, class and gender intersections in Trinidad, and how they have been studied. Finally, it dovetails with the discipline’s call for reflexivity about ‘Caribbean Studies’ and the perspectives it has produced (Trouillot 1992, 1998, Khan 2001, Price 2001, Maurer 2002, Slocum and Thomas 2003).

Key themes in the study, including family, religion, Carnival, and work, resonate with those familiar to the region, and somewhat definitive of Caribbean area studies. For example, the Anglophone Caribbean has been particularly understood through family and kinship studies. Primarily focusing on Afro-Caribbean family relations, this literature has both romanticized and problematised ‘matrifocality’ ((single) woman-centred households) as a marker of what is ‘typically’ Caribbean (Clarke 1957, Smith and Jayawardena 1959, Jayawardena 1962, Massiah 1982, Mohammed 1988a, Smith 1988,
Countering these, particularly with studies of Indo-Trinidadian households, others have similarly offered ‘persistance’ (Klass 1961) and ‘retention’ (Neihoff and Neihoff 1960, Smith 1963, Nevadomsky 1980a, 1980b, 1980c, 1981, 1983, 1984) paradigms that add interpretations about religion, geography and generation to those privileging ethnicity. As I have shown, Lisa Douglass’ exploration of family as a form of both power and meaning is more unusual.

Douglass’ (1992) ethnography of family life is also one of the few to shift focus from Afro-Caribbean, and partly Indo-Caribbean, labouring classes to elites and Whites. Anthropologists’ general thrust has been to understand Caribbean families in terms of family forms, sexual relations, informal kinship networks, struggles for survival, childrearing practices, and the status accorded to motherhood. The following chapters provide examples of some of these, but primarily explore how family becomes a basis for asserting and negotiating legalities.

A long interest in transplanted forms of African, Indian and Euro-Christian religions, and their syncretic combinations, has also characterized Caribbean literature (Klass 1991, Austin-Broos 1997, Vertovec 1992, Henry 2003). As Aisha Khan (2004, 4) points out, religious practices and identities shape and are shaped by discourses about ethnic identity and difference. Munasinghe (2001) also concludes that religions are associated with and often used as a marker for ethnicity. For example, Hinduism is read to mean Indo-Trinidadian and Orisha or Baptist signals an Afro-Trinidadian identity.

Work by Steven Vertovec (1989, 1991, 1995, 1998, 2001) further situates Hinduism in Trinidad within the wider Indian diaspora while Frances Henry (2003) argues that Orisha religious practices have increasingly become a symbol for pan-African nationalism in Trinidad. Globally associated with the birth of Rastafarianism, the Caribbean has also been studied in terms of the connections between religion and
colonial resistance, and political and nationalistic mobilization (Campbell 1985, Chevannes 1995, Murrell, Spencer and McFarlane 1998). As I show in Chapter 6, the transnational scope of Islam also has implications for the ways that citizenship plays out locally.


Often focusing on women, this literature has opened a historical and anthropological path for recognizing labour that is illegal, informal, public and private as work (Centre for Ethnic Studies 1993, Denis 2003). It has also highlighted the significance of survival strategies in the context of economic marginalization and workers’ interdependency, and the ways that ethnicity, class and gender are implicated in their social and economic relations. Women and men’s challenges to elite, male, state and capitalist control are frequent themes. Nonetheless, this study illuminates connections between the meanings of work and popular bases for legitimate action that are less often placed centre stage. To follow up on these points, Chapter 2 more extensively documents some of this regional and national scholarship on marketing, Islam, Carnival and patronage, and their ways of characterizing the region.

Overall, anthropology has been somewhat overwhelmingly concerned with ethnic identities and interaction in the Caribbean, and tropes of pluralism, creolisation and hybridity (Eriksen 1993, Maurer 2002, 2004). This is why the region has served, as Aisha Khan (2001) critically writes, as the “master symbol” of creolisation processes and
discourses. Led by E. Franklin Frazier, one strand of thinking defined itself by the search for new cultural forms, founded out of loss, in the Americas. The other searched for retention, persistence and revitalization of ancestral 'tradition' amidst "conflict, trauma, rupture and the violence" of colonization, plantation slavery and indentureship (Sheller 2003, 194).

Melville and Frances Herskovits’ (1947) ethnography of African cultural 'survivals' in the village of Toco, Trinidad was a watershed text in this focus on ethnicity (Yelvington 2001). Their framing can be seen thirty years later in Sidney Mintz’ and Richard Price’s (1976) argument that Africans across the Americas still shared a “grammar” or underlying system and structures brought from West Africa. Morton Klass’ (1961), Arthur and Juanita Neihoff’s (1960), and Robert Smith’s (1963) ethnographic work just before the post-independence period, on Indians in Trinidad, also emphasised 'persistence' and 'retention' paradigms. Largely, this early literature championed a 'plural society' thesis that cast ethnic groups as culturally distinct and socially segmented, even if internally stratified (Smith 1965). Leo Despres (1967), for example, argued that the colonial state was the aggregate that kept the plural society together and that its demise provoked the fall of any semblance of cohesion. Colin Clarke’s (1986) classic study of Indo-Trinidadians in San Fernando, which I further discuss below, also argued for a plural society model (also Clarke 1971).

Creolisation emerged as a counter-trope, instead defining the Caribbean by hybridity and mixing. In Jamaican Edward Kamau Brathwaite’s (1974) formulation, the Caribbean creole arrangement centred on the indigenization among all groups of African cultural forms, through processes of interculturalization, and more privileged European ones through process of acculturation. To different degrees, creolisation touched all ethnic groups
creating, among others, "hybridized"\textsuperscript{49} "Euro-creoles", "Afro-creoles" and "Indo-creoles"\textsuperscript{50} (Braithwaite 1977; Ryan 2000).

Yet, some argued that the framework's Afrocentrism left "Indian oriented culture" "peripheralised" (Sankeralli 1997) in conceptions of Trinidad and Tobago's 'national' culture and identity (also Ryan 1999b). Others argued that while identities developed in a shared, culturally-hybrid continuum, intersecting notions of (ethnic) "tribe" and 'community' continued to make racial 'purity', 'difference' and 'authenticity' salient countervailing discourses (Munasinghe 2001, Mohammed 2002, Khan 2004).

Anthropological concern with ethnicity and hybridity has had significance for another key Caribbean trope. Peter Wilson's (1973) dualistic framework of "reputation" and "respectability" sought to resolve the debate over shared or separate European and indigenous value systems. Based on his fieldwork on the island of Providencia, he proposed a different way of understanding the groups of values and goals that guide how women and men act, behave and associate with each other. In Wilson's work, reputation and respectability "draw boundaries" and are associated respectively with men and women (and masculinity and femininity), "poor people" and elites, and young and older men. They connect to discourses about creolisation because they signal the ways that the boundaries and content of categories such as gender, class and ethnicity are demarcated. This has implications for how these identities are mobilized and negotiated as forms of both power and meaning.

\textsuperscript{49} For example, Hernandez-Ramdwar (1995) writes of "blocks of raced constituencies labeled "African" and "Indian", each encompassing a variegated continuum of difference between them..." Though focusing on mixed race hybridity, she posits that seemingly homogenous identities can contain class, sexual and cultural heterogeneity. See also Ramcharan (1994, 7)

\textsuperscript{50} Ryan (2000) notes dissenting views about whether or not Indo-Trinidadian culture, which has survived in indigenized forms, can be called "creole". From this perspective, distinctive Indo-Trinidadian foods, rituals and cultural forms, revitalised and re-established in the new Caribbean environment (see Vertovec 1992), add to the multitude of forms that could be considered creole. The concept continues to have multivalent meanings. For example, "Creole" variously refers to European descendants or French Creoles, African descendents or aspects of dominant Trinidadian culture. Scholars such as Stuart Hall (1977) and Ryan (1999, 2000) have also noted the ambiguity in the term. It may also be used to refer to globalised processes of interculturation as well as to describe the specific Caribbean case of shared cultural and historical processes (Khan 2001, Munasinghe 2001).
Jean Besson (1993), in her case study of a Jamaican peasant community, challenged the Eurocentric assumptions and male bias in Wilson’s thesis. She argued that Wilson’s gendered dualism falsely constructed Afro-Caribbean women as “passive imitators of Eurocentric cultural values of respectability” and non-participants in a resistant, indigenous “counter-culture of reputation” (ibid, 30). Maarit Laitinen (1997) also argued that the dualistic paradigm used to differentiate between male and female socialization and values such as “reputation” and “respectability” does not work in Tobago. Women may voice values of respectability. Nonetheless, their everyday choices and behaviour suggest that the relationship between ideals and practice is complex, changing, fluid and context-dependent. Assumptions about how gendered, ethnicized and classed practices are linked to community and citizenship therefore need to be problematised.

Writing on Trinidad, Miller (1994) turned Wilson’s model inside out. Rather, than founding disparate value systems and practices in gender, class and ethnic identities, he described how dualistic values of “transience” and “transcendence” work to create these in the first place. Transience is associated with ideals of freedom, individualized expression and female sexuality, male mobility, spaces such as streets and licentious festivals such as Carnival. By contrast, transcendence is associated with family, religious observance, nostalgia, roots, property and the reaffirmation of an older, established moral order (ibid, 135-6). Miller’s discussion of, among other things, Carnival and Christmas sought to show how this dualism is mobilized in relation to time, space, people and things.

For Miller, transience and transcendence have opposing symbolic meanings that are claimed by those constructing and contesting group and individual identities. The dualism is particularly significant given his finding that few differences in material consumption and family life exist among ethnic groups in Trinidad. These are apolitical, stable, essential and neutral principles that are then “objectified in social distinctions” (ibid, 16) such as gender, class and ethnicity. As Stuart Hall (1990, 225) has described, “identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past”.

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For example, different ethnic groups may be associated with specific cultural retentions. As I show in Chapter 6, groups such as Trinidadian Muslims may self-consciously preserve transcendent symbols, such as dress, comportment and family forms, festivals and religious observances, to reaffirm their sense of ontology, otherness and legitimacy (Miller 1994, 142). From a completely different perspective, as I show in Chapters 4 and 5, mas makers may also import, invent and rely on notions of transcendence to negotiate participation in Carnival, the very festival that typically epitomizes transience.

Brackette Williams’ study of ethnicity in Guyana documents how unseen ideological processes rooted in colonization naturalise ethnic categories (what she calls “ghost hegemony”). As Rhoda Reddock (1995) similarly observes for Trinidad, mobilising these discourses to set and maintain (one’s own) and challenging (other groups’) boundaries is a significant part of “contestations” over political power and national culture. Yet, “dynamics of fragmentation” and “flux” undermine attempts to construct stable identities and totalities (ibid, 70). In particular, “too much freedom” in society and “too much mixing” (Sampath 1993, 237) blur moral divisions premised on ‘difference’ and manifested in ethnic/gender representations.

Gender brings me back to reputation and respectability, and its intersections with notions of ethnicity. As Reddock (1999, 11) wrote of women in mas and the contestation over ownership and definition of culture,

> In their rejection of Carnival as a national festival, Indian nationalists refer to this vulgarity and wanton display of sexuality which they argue is incompatible with the Indian or Hindu way of life. Indian women who participate in...

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51 As Reddock (1995, 21) put it, “...in creole Trinidad and Tobago, the symbols of national culture and national identity emerged from a struggle over representation and citizenship of specific classes, genders and ethnic groups. This struggle continues as other groups seek to define their presence in the society. Through a continuous struggle and contestation, the authenticity of these symbols is being challenged by other groups and in the process are (sic) being transformed”. Despite the social and historical fluidity of ethnic group distinctions, established boundaries remain important because, as Kempadoo (1999, 105) has observed, “...people who live outside the boundaries of what we know as racial and ethnic groups, do not exist, according to dominant perceptions”.

52 In this regard, claims to the ‘sanctity’ of the Indian or Hindu way of life are paralleled by disparagement of Afro-Trinidadian women for their behaviour and Afro-Trinidadian men for not controlling them.
carnival until recently were seen as putting a stain on their sacred womanhood. The debauchery of this festival is seen as another example of the decadence and low moral standards of creole society and the African population in particular and some have called for Indians to refrain from participation. In this situation it is the Indian women in particular who have to be watched for it is they who have the responsibility of maintaining the image of the culture (note added).

Processes of both cultural persistence and hybridity are gendered because women and men have differential access to status and legitimacy. For example, men of all ethnicities can access status from both honour or respectability and reputation while contesting their own and other patriarchies. By contrast, women’s 'authentic' gender identities are more greatly tied to a debate (among patriarchies) about ethnic difference and boundaries. Women of all ethnicities therefore access and experience honour and shame very differently from men of the same and other ethnic groups (Hosein 2004). I discuss this experience further when I look at the intersections of gender, enfranchisement and leadership in Chapter 6.

Chapter 2 provides a historical background to ethnic, class, gender and politics in Trinidad. However, I’ve outlined the significance of creolisation to the play of transience and transcendence because these notions cannot be understood outside of popular deliberations regarding ‘purity’ and mixing of gender identities, class practices and, especially, ethnic markers in Trinidad. At the same time, these identity categories cannot be made concrete without discourses of honour and shame. On this point, Aisha Khan (1995, 5) has written,

Linked most directly with genotype/phenotype and religious belief and practice, the purity/impurity trope also signals a concern with boundaries, authenticity, assimilation and subsumption. For racial considerations, ethnic "mixing" threatens the identity of distinct groups, leaving room for jeopardized political viability and aesthetic/phenotypical unpredictability which point to social-cultural boundary transgression...Purity is linked
with morality in part through piety...Purity is also the point of convergence between religious and racial/ethnic identities.⁵³

Yet, this study departs from both plural and creole society models that suggest ethnicity is key to understanding Caribbean, and especially Trinidadian, society. More recent anthropological and feminist scholarship has explored and problematised the raced and gendered assumptions and implications of these perspectives (Mohammed 1988b, 1998, Williams 1991, Kanhai 1999, Yelvington 1993, Reddock 1997, 1999, 2002, Hosein 2001, Puri 2004, Douillet 2005). Instead, I show that while various kinds of identities provide critical context and power, dispositions such as contacts or return to spirituality create significant intersections on other grounds. Beginning in Chapter 3, I more fully explore their content and significance. Rather than priorities decided chiefly by ethnic, class or gender locations, these dispositions turn out to be key to the ways that families, friends, police, state bureaucrats, political activists, religious leaders and associational members relate to each other across identity differences.

Perhaps, one could say that, in plural society perspectives, ethnicity was king. In contrast, creolisation perspectives stressed biological and cultural mixing, hybridity and ambiguity. This meant that other explanations had to be sought for continual, boundary marking practices, and the intersections of class and gender. Like Khan’s writing on the opposing demands of purity and “living good with people”, Miller used the concepts of transience and transcendence to identify core values that filtered into understandings of ethnicity, class, sexual and gender categories, making them significant.

⁵³ Yet, as I have discussed, perhaps forms of assertiveness such as style and “boldfaceness” enable women and men to manage how these respectability and reputation are defined and negotiated. Market vendors, for instance, feel morally strong about selling on the road, and both boldfaceness and style are key to how they manage illegality, institutional authority, reciprocal relations and moral suasion. Though newspaper reports may sometimes give roadside vendors a “bad reputation”, they prevent their action from being entirely cast as trivial, “doh care-ish” or shameful. This highlights why ethnic categories, and their class and gender intersections, can be easily layered by tactics for negotiating power that reflect other values that matter, and are often missed. For this reason, this study departs from much Caribbean studies’ scholarship to focus light on these.
As I show in Chapters 4 and 6, notions of shame and reputation, purity and respectability, and transcendence and transience clearly shape how women negotiate decision-making with male community leaders and how squatters navigate the exchange of jobs and votes. As Shalini Puri points out, the "schematic opposition" between reputation/respectability or transience/transcendence is "useful in making visible two related and conflicting sets of cultural desires, practices, and allegiances that are elaborated to an unusual degree in the Caribbean" (2003, 23). Yet, such notions are not as dualistic as assumed. In particular, I want to build on notions of respectability and transcendence while pushing this argument further.

The dispositions focused on in this study cross both identity categories and the boundaries between transience/reputation and transcendence/respectability. They highlight the ways that identities are experienced because of stratification, and the ways that different moral orders are drawn upon to achieve ends, make sense of events, articulate feelings and experience relationships. They highlight stratification because they provide a lens for seeing the ways that women and men assert and engage with authority, and the correspondences across different styles of action. They also illuminate why public life includes both lore and law and, necessarily, notions of reasonableness. This is because everybody have to eat, return to spirituality, contacts and love for mas include practices, desires, relations and tactics that defy easy moral dualism.

The value attributed to everybody have to eat or contacts clearly suggests that vendors and squatters are invested in family, work, home, hierarchy and honesty. Mas makers' commitment to their art and Muslim women's to their religion and community also highlight this. The study essentially shows how tensions and maneuvering around authority, legitimacy and decision-making start to emerge from these concerns. Yet, practices stereotypically associated with reputation and transience, such as autonomy, mobility, trickery and display, are also mobilized to achieve these ends.

As I show in Chapter 4, squatter's relations with high-ranking party activists or vendors with police provide good examples. The dispositions that animate my analysis not only
suggest that Caribbean anthropology's privileging of ethnicity may hide other key forms of power and meaning, but that order-making practices rooted in transcendence and respectability, rather than tropes of resistance, may usefully illustrate why negotiations over legitimate authority play out as they do.

Regardless of identity differences, women and men all mobilize notions of reasonableness and all play reputation and respectability as they exercise and experience different kinds of authority. Yet, what stand out are not stories of resistance, though these document irreplaceable scenes. Rather, order-making practices catch attention. They show much deliberation about cooperation and fairness, participation on the basis of family, God, need and leadership, and contending powers and meanings attached to claims on respectability and transcendence.

On this topic, Shalini Puri argues that Caribbean studies has "emphasized and celebrated the antisystemic values of reputation to the exclusion of respectability" (2003, 24). Critiquing a "disproportionate" emphasis on Carnival (vs. Christmas) to understand Caribbean societies, she situates this "privileging of reputation in Caribbean studies" as "continuous with a fetishization of resistance and transgression in cultural studies more broadly" (ibid, 24).

Despite working class women's participation in the transgressive spaces of street cultures, yards and dancehalls, reputation is dualistically masculinized. This has clear implications for how gender politics are acknowledged. As Puri writes,

For to the extent that respectability historically and discursively has been associated with the feminine, with mothers and wives promoting religiosity, economy, and the cultivation of domestic virtues, the current erasure or downright denigration of respectability as simply buying into dominant ideology devalues the feminine. In some senses, then, contemporary cultural theory's celebration of reputation positions women as acquiescing to the status quo and men as resisting it. Ironically, then, an approach to resistance that initially sought alternatives to the heroic masculine subject may be reinstating it. (ibid, 31)
Fetishizing resistance and reputation therefore narrows the continuum along which everyday engagements with power can be understood. This is because it lionizes the public and spectacular “over a quieter, less flamboyant daily reality” (ibid 31). Using Trinidadian novelist Earl Lovelace’s characters Fisheye and Aldrick54 as examples, Puri further argues that it ignores how much (masculine) performance of rebellion and reputation often relies on the (women’s) “respectable” labour.

Puri’s perspective suggests that attention to “the resources of respectability” (ibid 25), to performances of transgression as well as “desires for acceptance and assimilation”, to investments in work as well as in relief from exploitation can help Caribbean scholarship more equitably engage the range of ways that women and men participate in public life. Against Wilson (1973), respectability can also be about the drive toward equality amidst stratification. This approach fits my own observations and emphasis on women’s and men’s ways of claiming and asserting forms of power grounded in social politics, the progressive privatization of public space and desires for order, fairness, respect, survival, self-regulation and balance.

This study contributes to the political anthropology of the Caribbean from this angle. This scholarship often dated back to Archie Singham’s (1968) classic study of leadership in colonial Antigua. Despite a vast literature on elections in Trinidad and Tobago, there is strikingly little ethnography on elections, government and political parties. Yogendra Malik’s (1970) study of political elites is one clear exception. Mainly, one reads secondary data drawn from newspapers, speeches, official statistics, polls, pamphlets, reports, memoirs, government reports, autobiographies and biographies. Interviews almost wholly with (political and bureaucratic) elites are also common. However, they together signal an emphasis on what people say. Ethnography’s richness results, not only

54 Trinidadian writer Earl Lovelace’s novel, The Dragon Can’t Dance, powerfully charts the stories of urban, working class, Afro-Trinidadian male protagonists who in various ways reject and rebel against transcendent kinds of demands associated with having responsibilities related to a job, family, partner or house. In addition to one male figure, an Indo-Trinidadian, only female characters seek these very markers of hard work, family union and success. Yet, as Puri notes (2003, 32), “the novel is more representative in that these “respectable” characters remain marginal to the novel, somehow not achieving the same representational depth, embodiment, sexuality, or physical beauty” as the male characters that animate the novel’s events.
from “thick description” (Geertz 1973), but also from unarticulated connections often revealed by what people do55.

There is almost no political analysis that explores the city of San Fernando ethnographically or to any depth. When the spotlight falls on the city, it is cast as a character in the story of national political developments and not as its own play within this larger theatre of politics. By giving room to the meanings women and men attribute to the banal and mundane in their lives, as they work, live, vote, socialize and pray in San Fernando, this study seeks to fill this gap. Colin Clarke’s (1986) excellent ethnography of San Fernando, *East Indians in a West Indian Town*, is a study of ethnicity and pluralism in the city, and the only work of its kind to date56. National literature on San Fernando mainly comprises histories57, commemorative booklets produced by the City Council58 and Michael Anthony’s (1970) popular short novel, *The Year in San Fernando*.

Clarke’s study “is about East Indians in San Fernando, and focuses on their social status, cultural characteristics and relations with the larger Creole population” (1986, 4). Though published in the mid-1980s, his fieldwork uses electoral and demographic data spanning 1931 to the 1970s. It is also based on surveys and participant-observation conducted in San Fernando and Debe in the 1960s. Grounding his analysis in the theory of pluralism, he concluded that San Fernando (and Debe) society is segmented along ethnic lines defined by notions of ‘race’. Within segments, it is stratified by colour, education, occupation, religion and caste. He argued that ‘racial boundaries’ remained important as a basis for social segmentation and political alignment. Thus, social or residential proximity, religious conversion nor class mobility had eroded “racial segmentation” (ibid, 150-1). Formal electoral competition provided the context for his approach.

55 Much Caribbean literature emphasizes the importance of ‘talk’ (Abrahams 1983) and, perhaps, this sensibility is shared by national academics.
56 However, ethnographies by Viranjini Munasinghe (2001) and Aisha Khan (2004) are situated in Central and South Trinidad respectively.
The picture detailed by Clarke is fascinating. It reflects both academic and popular concerns of the period. However, the present study is very different. It deliberately departs from foregrounding ethnicity in a persistence-change approach often used by anthropologists in studies of (Indians in) Trinidad. For reasons I have outlined above, it is also not primarily concerned with the debates regarding pluralism and creolisation, occupational mobility, endogamy, retention of ethnic traits, racial identity and racialised electoral competition.

Put briefly, this study is instead attentive to politics in terms of values, choices, contesting relations, conflict resolution, collective action, and experiences of governance. Focus is primarily given to informal connections, moral codes and public interactions. This is because earlier studies have not sufficiently addressed issues of how politics involves informal authority and because they didn’t sufficiently evoke the everyday meanings, feelings and relationships associated with how institutions and processes actually work.

Clarke documents migration to San Fernando, and an expansion of residential areas. However, he doesn’t discuss the city as a daily catchment area and crossroad. As the following chapters detail, this is an important aspect of San Fernando. It provides a key context for this study which focuses on catchment sites rather than residential groupings. 

East Indians in a West Indian Town clearly and expansively engages with informal social life. Yet, the spaces in which it is submerged are religiously- and ethnically-defined, based on residential area, primarily elite social clubs, and political parties. In contrast, the sites chosen in this study are based on illegal, democratic, informal and reciprocal practices that provide a glimpse of normative life or what matters, how what matters is made to count and how this is done skillfully. Where they appear along our route, I stop and look around to then begin to assess ethnic, religious, gender, class, residential and other factors.

To date, there is no ethnographic writing on the areas I begin to explore below. Not only is there no anthropological scholarship on the San Fernando Central Market, the ASJA
San Fernando Jama Masjid, the Lionel Jagessar and Associates Mas Camp\(^{59}\) nor King’s Wharf and the Railway Line, but there is almost none on street vending, organizational elections, bandleading or squatting and patronage in this city. These particular sites are essential because they specifically highlight the intersection of informal and formal order-making practices, provide complementary and contrasting pictures of how nationalism, patronage, leadership and enfranchisement are made meaningful, and direct attention to the power and meaning of ordinary women and men’s feelings.

As the historical and literature background provided in the next chapter shows, San Fernando also presents a catchment site pulling together aspects of life typical of many parts of Trinidad. Trinidadian economist and writer, Lloyd Best once described Trinidad as a “one city state”, asserting that the capital Port of Spain in North Trinidad is the fulcrum around which island life pivots (2001, 15). To some extent this is very true. Yet as the nation’s second though largest city, San Fernando can also present ways to understand the nation that are centred in the less-studied South of the island, which stands slightly aloof from the social and political dominance of North Trinidad. In this way, San Fernando is also exceptional. Far from being a typical West Indian town, “along with Montego Bay, Jamaica, it is one of only two real “second cities” in the Commonwealth Caribbean” (Richardson 1988). It provides an ideal location for scholarship that works in from the margins. This study, therefore, complements, enriches and updates the ethnographic picture that Colin Clarke presented thirty years ago of San Fernando, Trinidad.

\(^{59}\) However, the camp is briefly highlighted in Bellour and Kinser, 1998.
1.5 Conclusions of the study

The following chapters first describe the study’s key sites. They then detail how aspects of life that most matter are articulated, and present different perspectives on how these aspects contour expressions of authority. Chapter 3 delves into lore. Chapter 4 introduces law and shows how lore operates there. Chapter 5 moves from lore to bring the perspectives of those located within law because of office, legislation or leadership. Respectively and across three of the study’s sites, Chapter 3, Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 interrogate concepts of habitus, public life and legitimate authority.

Chapter 6 guides emphasis back to lore, but at another tier, and to show the operation of office, legislation and leadership there. In doing so, it pulls the key concepts and themes together in a case study of the fourth site. Chapter 7 takes a bird’s eye view of this terrain and its significance for normativity. Focusing on points of intersection between lore and law, such as emotion, state, nation, gender and democracy, it summarises Trinidadian experiences of citizenship and the belonging. This concluding chapter also suggests a number of implications and conclusions.
In summary, values regarding authority emerge from the informal sphere and extend across official practices and processes. This means that Trinidadian public life is defined by a continuum that spans legalities, including those centred in ‘lore’. Within this continuum, and amidst forms of stratification, notions of reasonableness and sentiment are at work. These shape how forms of power, such as need, God or gender, are tactically mobilized, giving life to normativity and aesthetic authority. Negotiations, navigations and assertions regarding legitimacy, therefore, lie at the heart of how politics is lived.

These observations affirm the significance of what most matters to ordinary people. Analysis that starts from here challenges liberal assumptions of political and apolitical behaviour. Participation does not have to measure up to leaders’, political and economic elites’, masculine or institutional definitions to have implications for politics in public life. This approach also highlights how statist or eurocentric conceptions, of citizenship, nationalism, enfranchisement and leadership, may skew the meanings of what women and men do.

Pushed a step further, it illustrates how assumptions about the significance of ethnicity, class and gender may overdetermine understanding of why they do these things. Altogether, what appears are more diffuse, less singularly top-down manifestations of hegemony that problematise Caribbean studies’ distinctive taste for narratives of resistance and transience. Such florescence of meaning emerges, in the following pages, through attention to order-making practices amidst “the contingencies of local contexts and daily life” (Khan 2001: 294).
Chapter Two: Locating Public Participation

2.1 Introduction

So far I have outlined the study’s approach to politics and the considerations that led to a focus on informal social life. This chapter takes an ‘aerial’ view to the sites and groups through which I examine such public participation. First, it surveys the unfolding history of Trinidad and Tobago, and San Fernando. Then, it circles in to more closely appreciate an ethnographic and historical picture of the San Fernando Central Market, Lionel Jagessar and Associates Mas Camp, San Fernando Jama Masjid and Railway Line extension of the King’s Wharf. With this background, I then turn to the next chapter’s focus on the ways that habitus is created and reproduced.

Why these settings? A wide variety of sites could be useful for exploring governance in San Fernando. However, I particularly sought these because they provided clear examples of “margins” where practices both “outside and inside the law” (Das and Poole
2004, 23) occur. Each site highlights mundane practices that blur different kinds of authority. In each, there are constant assertions of legal politics. These catchments also typify the ways that social politics has been and continues to be created, layered, reproduced and refined. Therefore, each epitomizes continual negotiation over legitimate practice. Further, each setting presents a slightly different picture. In certain respects each complements the other, adding dimensions that would not necessarily otherwise be covered. In juxtaposition we can also see more general patterns and conclusions as certain effects are repeated across different sites or contrasted.

As they gain depth in later chapters, I show how lore and law coexist in very disparate ways, neither entirely overlapping nor replacing the other. Sometimes, women market vendors and male mas makers are engaged in a balancing act with police or mid-level bureaucrats. Sometimes, they are in outright contestation. In other moments, lore almost entirely eclipses law or different kinds of formal authority exist precisely because of the continuity of the informal terrain. These images develop focus in the squatting settlement and in the masjid respectively. Together, these settings illuminate the political significance of family, and economic, religious and cultural life.

Ideals regarding family, for example, help explain what goes on amongst all these catchments. This is also true for values of relationship and reciprocity more generally. Yet, while aspects of family and friendship explain patronage relations in the mas camp, squatting community and mosque, they are linked more directly to issues of public space around the market. In another twist, notions of spirituality and culture in the masjid and mas camp unexpectedly correspond. Yet, they create different configurations of nationalism and transnationalism. Crossed at another joint, issues of enfranchisement in national-level elections in the masjid correspond with concerns of squatters in national general elections.

Highlighting yet different intersections, livelihood concerns, or 'food', are especially relevant for female and male market vendors, mas makers and squatters. While they do not seem so crucial to male masjid leaders' considerations, they nonetheless are
surprisingly significant. From a different angle, while female marketing vendors are at the forefront of governance negotiations, it is men in the masjid who are most vociferous. In fact, notions of gender, and especially masculinity, influence investments in leadership and authority in the masjid and mas camp, and in squatters’ lives. Essentially, each group’s women and men are negotiating their participation, whether on roadsides or roads, in meetings in City Hall and constituency offices, in associational and national elections, or in neighbourhoods and jobs sites. While there are clear differences, there are also parallels or homologies among these settings that suggest an interconnected normative framework. Before thickly detailing these, it is necessary to describe Trinidad and the City of San Fernando.

2.2 The City of San Fernando and the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

After the capital Port of Spain, San Fernando is Trinidad’s second city. Fifty-six kilometres (Clarke 1986, 32) from the seat of government, it rises out of the sea along the South West coast of the island of Trinidad, and densely settles in hills that rise unevenly as they go inland. Its boundaries are marked by the Guaracara River to the North, the Oropouche River to the South, the Sir Solomon Hochoy Highway to the East and the Gulf of Paria to the West. The 18 km sq. city has its own pre-Columbian, colonial and post-colonial story lacing through the larger history of the twin-island Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, and especially the island of Trinidad.

Trinidad is 1,864 square miles and lies 11 kilometres off the coast of Venezuela. After Columbus encountered the island in 1498, Spanish colonial control stretched from the sixteenth century until British take over in 1797 (Brereton 1979, 8). Prior to Spanish arrival, indigenous Venezuelans were settling and trading in San Fernando, and migrating between the two shores. Locally remembered as “Guarahoons” or “Warahoons” (from the Warao or Waraho peoples (Forte 2005)), they arrived at the wharf, in pirogues or dug out canoes, to sell hammocks, parrots, raw sugar (papelona), farine, plantains and tasajo until
the early twentieth century (Ottley 1971, 105). Over two centuries, colonization virtually
decimated the population of indigenous people living all over Trinidad.

Repopulation only really began after 1777 when the Spanish government’s “Cedula of
Population” (made official in 1783) offered incentives to Catholic, White and Coloured
French planters to migrate and settle. They brought the first large numbers of enslaved
Africans with them in their move from French-controlled islands. Local records say that
San Fernando began as a fishing village in 1786 with an area of eleven acres (San
Fernando Borough Council 1970). However, French migration meant that a market, a
central square and a Roman Catholic church were soon established. Anglicans,
Methodists, Presbyterians and other denominations were still to come.

In 1784, in recognition of the young king Ferdinand VII of Spain, Spanish Governor Don
Jose Maria Chacon named the town San Fernando de N aparima1 (Ottley 1971, 167). The
combined title emerged from “Anaparima”2 which was the name that native inhabitants
had given to the area (Anthony 2001). When Ralph Abercromby captured Trinidad in
1797, English settlers also took over land in San Fernando. In 1817, the Governor, Sir
Ralph Woodford, built San Fernando’s first wharf (Richards and Sinanan 1946). Three
hundred feet long and wooden at the time, I return to it, in twenty-first century form, in
later chapters.

Trinidad became a Crown Colony, directly ruled by Britain, in 1802 (Brereton 1979, 8).
The British captured Tobago in 1814 and administratively joined the islands of Trinidad
and Tobago as one Crown Colony in 1898 (Brereton 1981, 156). The town of San
Fernando was established in 18453 and the first Town Council met in 1846. Just after

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1 See also Anthony (1988, 249).
2 Anaparima is sometimes thought to mean a “single hill”. “Legend also has it that one Waraho hero,
Haburi who was fleeing with his mother from the frog woman of Orinoco, entered Trinidad and they were
transformed into the Mountain Anaparima. It is believed that this caused the Warahos to continue visiting
San Fernando until the 1900’s” (Monday 17 November 2003, Welcome to the City of San Fernando, p40)
3 Port of Spain had municipal government long before San Fernando which, instead, functioned through
public meetings and frequent petitions. The town was established on October 18, 1845 when the Legislative
Council passed the first Municipal Ordinance for the town. It made provision for a Town Council of San
Fernando with nine councilors and one of the group to be President. The Town Council was to depend on
house rates and wharf dues for revenue rather than monies from central government, and was responsible
1853, San Fernando became a Borough with a Mayor and a Town Hall. This marks the beginning of local government for this present-day city. Pavement vendors were recorded since 1842 (Ottley 1971, 17) and, as the practice continues, they appear again throughout this study. Interestingly, for we will be meeting police in upcoming chapters, the police station was established as early as 1869 (San Fernando Mayor’s Office 1985).

By the end of the nineteenth century, and following the abolition of slavery in 1834, Indians, Chinese, Syrians, Portuguese and others had been brought to the colony as labourers or migrated as traders. Indians were the largest group of these migrants. Between 1845 and 1917 (when indentureship was abolished), about 144,000 were brought to Trinidad as indentured workers for the sugar plantations (Singh 1988). Local-born and colonial British and French elites dominated the social order. Below were the “middle strata” (Reddock 1994) and educated “coloureds” and at the bottom were the African ex-slaves and Indians. Migration from other Caribbean islands to Trinidad continued throughout the early twentieth century to rapidly expand the population.

However, San Fernando remained relatively small in comparison to Port of Spain. Its population of 1,499 women and 1,384 men was almost six times smaller than Port of Spain in 1851 (Richards and Sinanan, 1946). Nonetheless, highlighting the city’s long history as an urban catchment area, Ottley (1971, 11) notes that freed slaves “flocked” to San Fernando from surrounding sugar estates throughout the mid-nineteenth century. The sugar industry greatly contributed to the city’s expansion in the nineteenth century (1851-1881), while the oil industry played this role in the twentieth.

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4 An experimental system of local government had operated for seven years by the time the first Mayor, Dr. Robert Johnstone, was elected and the term Borough Council used in San Fernando for the first time. This followed the Legislative Council’s passing of a new local government law which established Borough Councils in both Port of Spain and San Fernando: Ordinance No. 10 of 1853, “Regulations of Municipal Corporations in the Island” (Ottley 1971, 19-23, 35-38).

5 San Fernando is the site for the historic Thursday 30 October, 1884 Hosay crisis which resulted from violent and deadly colonial suppression of Indians’ commemoration of Husein, grandson of the Prophet Mohammed, who died in battle at Kerbala. This is a Shi’ite Muslim practice (see also Anthony 2001)

6 Migration into the city continues mainly from the counties of Victoria and St. Patrick which surround San Fernando (CSO 2000)
Throughout the indentureship period, the disproportionate sex ratio between Indian women and men significantly shaped gender relations. These women came to Trinidad on their own as workers, but in far fewer numbers than men. Through migration, they were often able to escape stringent caste and religious rules. Indian men, planters, judges, Presbyterian missionaries and colonial authorities reinforced each other’s attempts to constrain Indian women, through legislation and other means, from leaving relationships, earning higher wages and acquiring property (Reddock 1994, 42).

The ‘Woman Question’ remained unresolved throughout indentureship and contributed to its abolition. It was seen “as a system which, by leading Indian women to immoral lives, was bringing international disrepute on Indian womanhood” (ibid, 45). In the post-indentureship period, the conflation of European Christian ideals of womanhood and Indian ideals of ‘Sita’ continued to reshape existing patterns of social organization toward women’s greater dependency and home-based, unwaged, subsistence work and petty agriculture.

Similar efforts were being made with working class and peasant African women. This group had shown disinclination to marriage and popular will to participate in labour resistance (Reddock 1994). Primarily, they were engaged in waged and unwaged agriculture, petty-commodity production, trade, and work as domestics, seamstresses, laundresses and general labour. Urban African women were particularly seen as independent, immoral, polygamous, licentious, rowdy and part of street culture. This fed popular concern with the ‘deviance’ of the West Indian family. In the professional world of the civil service, nursing or teaching, there was a sexual division of labour with regard to women’s wages, jobs, occupational mobility and women’s marital status. Coloureds and others from the upper and middle strata more closely conformed to ideals of the housewife (Reddock 1994).

The period leading into the early twentieth century witnessed the first struggles for representative government. First, these were led by mostly local-born Europeans and mixed professionals. Nationalism in the early twentieth century comprised early facets of
Creole nationalism against colonial rule (it also included some local whites), African nationalism and Indian nationalism. Creole nationalism, which was to become dominant in the movement to Independence, was mainly linked to the development of race and class consciousness among middle strata coloureds, and educated and working class Africans. It was fed by African racial pride, the authoritarianism of Crown Colony government, and the exploitative nature of the plantocracy, merchant class and white elites.

Among working class women, there were high levels of participation in popular movements and organizations. In limited ways, these women were able to put their issues and positions on the trade union agenda (Reddock 1994). The Creole nationalist movement did not attract large numbers of Indians. Fearing domination by a Christian, African majority, Indo-Trinidadians were often at odds with its self-rule aims (Ryan 1971). This group was clearly working out its own identity in relation to its internal class, caste and religious differences, Indian notions of patriarchy, and (in part the stereotypes of) other ethnic groups (Mohammed 1994).

1925 marks the introduction of the first elected representatives to the Governor's Legislative Council. However, by the 1930s, African and Indian leaders and working classes, particularly from central and south Trinidad, began to seize political leadership. In 1946, universal suffrage for all citizens over twenty-one years old was granted. This formally marked the ascendance of nationalist liberal style politics. A discourse emphasizing ethnic electoral competition began to marginalise worker-centred politics since this period. However, elected officials only began to enjoy a greater degree of executive authority after 1950 (Ryan 1972).

In addition to Indian and African nationalist movements, women of the “oppressed and exploited classes” participated in both trade union organizing and protests, and political parties (Reddock 1994, 155). In 1934, the Legislative Council accepted a motion (passed

7 Elite San Fernandians who served on the council in the twentieth century included Gerrard Montano, Timothy Roodal, Jack Kelshall and Roy Joseph.
in 1930 at the Port of Spain City Council level) to enable women to be representatives. Eighty-two years had gone by before the San Fernando Borough Council made provision for the enfranchisement of women aged thirty years and over⁸ (Ottley 1971, 135). The following year, in 1936, the age qualification was reduced to twenty-one for qualified burgesses. By 1937, they could hold positions of Councilors, Mayor or Deputy Mayor.

In the first year that women were allowed to run as candidates, social worker Audrey Jeffers won a seat in the Port of Spain City Council (Reddock 1994, 181). Beryl Archibald Crichlow was the first woman to be elected Councilor in the San Fernando Borough Council. She served three terms (nine years). In 1949, she was elected Deputy Mayor in San Fernando and, briefly, held the position of Mayor. Both women were on the Constitutional Reform Committee that was established in 1947 after the 1946 elections. Women have continued to be involved in labour and political party organizing since. These kinds of growing public participation in the post-World War Two years, provided a base (of African and coloured women of different strata) for later formation of the People's National Movement⁹ (PNM) in the mid-1950s.

Ethnicity has, therefore, long shaped social and political organizing and relations in colonial (Brereton 1979) and post-colonial Trinidad and Tobago (Ryan 1972, Ryan 1988a). Especially since the 1942 elections, notions of race have also intersected partisan politics. The main parties dominating government have been popularly associated with specific ethnic groups or alliances among them. For example, the People's National Movement (PNM), which began to emerge in the mid-1950s, was associated with Afro-Trinidadians, Christians and, to a lesser extent, urban Muslims. Other parties were associated with an alliance of White, Portuguese and Syrian Catholics, with urban Indo-Trinidadian Presbyterians, with rural Indo-Trinidadian Hindus, and later with shifting configurations of these religious, geographical and 'racial' voting blocs. Though elite led,

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⁸ This change occurred with the Borough Council’s approval of Ordinance No. 40 of 1935. It came into force on May 16th 1936.

⁹ The People’s National Movement (PNM), under the leadership of Dr. Eric Williams, led the country on the march for self-government and, finally, independence in 1962. The PNM won every election until 1986.
parties that have won power have comprised cross-class support. Parties associated with intellectuals, workers, leftist politics and independents have rarely successfully fought elections.

The PNM led the country to independence from Britain in 1962 and to status as a Republic in 1976. Under the PNM, which ruled the country from 1956 to 1986, an assimilationist model determined the state’s approach to ethnicity (Braithwaite 1974; Ryan 1999, 5). PNM nationalists saw the emerging culture as a Creole one with all other ethnic groups adapting to it. However, ongoing cultural struggles and negotiation among classes, religious and ethnic groups, and geographically differentiated communities, were also transforming Creole culture in practice. Indo-Trinidadians, and particularly rural Hindus who were unwilling to ally with the PNM, felt excluded from power and representation in national politics. In turn, they were criticized for supporting co-ethnic leaders and practicing ‘communalist’ politics.

Government only changed hands in 1986 when the National Alliance for Reconstruction (NAR), considered the country’s first widely multi-ethnic and multi-religious party, won a landslide electoral victory (Ryan 1989b). Power was returned to the PNM in the next election, but lost to the Indo-Trinidadian, Hindu-led United National Congress (UNC) when the NAR and UNC formed a coalition government in 1995. Although the UNC won again in 2000, general elections were called again in 2001 and resulted in a tie. The President appointed the PNM to govern until elections in 2002, which the party won by four seats and 4.1% of the national vote.

In 1958, Trinidad and Tobago adopted the British Westminster model of government. Government is, therefore, organized along a bicameral parliamentary system, which consists of a Lower House or House of Representatives and an Upper House or Senate. Together, they exercise legislative power. The House of Representatives comprises the Speaker of the House and forty-one members representing single constituency seats. Two represent Tobago. The Prime Minister and Cabinet, whose members are often drawn

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from among Members of Parliament, hold executive power. Of the Senate’s thirty-one members, the President on the advice of the Prime Minister appoints sixteen, six are recommended by the Leader of the Opposition and nine are appointed as Independent Senators. The members of the Senate and the House of Representatives elect the President\textsuperscript{11}. Every five years, general elections are held under the ‘first past the post’ system.

The Ministry of Local Government guides the local government\textsuperscript{12} system. Administratively, there are nine regional corporations\textsuperscript{13}, two city corporations (Port of Spain and San Fernando), three borough corporations\textsuperscript{14} and one ward (Tobago). In San Fernando, the City Council, which heads the City Corporation, comprises nine elected councilors and three aldermen elected by the councilors. The Mayor is the chairs. This system of representation by electoral district and of elections every three years, was established in the Representation of the People Act No. 41 of 1967, which set the constitution of the Council (San Fernando Borough Council 1970).

Interestingly, the terrain traversed in this study constitutes two overlapping administrative divisions. One the one hand, it is part of the constituency of San Fernando West\textsuperscript{15}. On the

\textsuperscript{11} There is an elected Tobago House of Assembly which shares control of the island’s internal affairs, but is subject to the executive authority of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

\textsuperscript{12} Local government can be defined as “self-government involving the administration of public affairs in each locality by a body of representatives of the local community” (Ragoonath 2002, 75).

\textsuperscript{13} These are Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo, Diego Martin, Mayaro/Rio Claro, Penal/Debe, Princes Town, Sangre Grande, San Juan/Laventille, Siparia, and Tunapuna/Piarco.

\textsuperscript{14} These are Arima, Point Fortin and Chaguanas.

\textsuperscript{15} The city of San Fernando is divided into two constituencies, San Fernando East and San Fernando West. The West constituency, on its North boundary extends from the seacoast at the mouth of the Marabella River along the South bank of the Marabella River to the Southern bank of Pariag St., then Northeast along Pariag St to New City Ave., then Eastwards along City Ave. to its junction with the Southern Main Road.

The East boundary extends South along the Southern Main Road to the junction with Point a Pierre Road, then Southwest along Point a Pierre Road to the boundary between Lots 203 and 205, Southeast along the boundary line to the Northwest end of Ogeeraly St., Southeast through Manjack St. and along Arch St. to Lambie St. It then runs South and West to Jarvis St., Southeast to Solomon St., Southwest to Circular Rd., then East to Royal Rd., Southwest along Coffee St. to Funrose St., South to Claire St., then to Austin St. and Southerly to Parry St. First, Easterly to Bertrand St. It then continues Southerly along Rushworth St. to Cipero St. and Southwest to the point where it crosses the South bank of the Cirpero River. There it abuts the Southern Main Rd.

The South boundary goes from here to Church St., then Northwest to the South Trunk Road, Southwest to the point where it crosses the East bank of the Oropouche River, Northeast along the East bank to the mouth of the Oropouche.
other, it is part of the City of San Fernando, which encompasses both San Fernando West and East. San Fernando was declared a city on November 18, 1988 (Anthony 1988, 257).

The constituency of San Fernando West has played an interesting part in Trinidad and Tobago's electoral history. Though long considered a 'safe seat' for the PNM, it has increasingly been a 'marginal' constituency (Ryan 2003) since the Election and Boundaries Commission (EBC) changed the constituency boundaries in 1986 and 1991 (EBC Reports 1986, 1991), adding polling divisions that previously voted against the ruling party. A marginal constituency is one where elections may not be easily predicted or are won by small margins (of less than 2500 votes), usually because of the religious and 'racial' demographic of the space. Nonetheless, San Fernando's politics have long defied a simple view of ethnic contestation between the almost equal populations of Indo-Trinidadians and Afro-Trinidadians. Both before and after the emergence of the PNM, shifting alliances have involved different combinations of Muslim and Presbyterian Indo-Trinidadians, Hindu Indo-Trinidadians and Afro-Trinidadians (Clarke 1986).

In San Fernando, margins of victory have been shrinking since the 1986 elections when the NAR won almost 60% of the constituency vote. The NAR win reflected a more generalized, national disaffection with the PNM as well as the constituency boundary change. In San Fernando, the result was a previously PNM voting bloc, now split across two parties. In the 1995 elections, the PNM held onto the seat by 1,228 votes. However, the constituency changed hands from the PNM to the UNC in 2000. The UNC seized the seat in this election by a margin of only 943 votes. In 2001, it won with a margin of only

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16 The area includes the electoral districts Cocoyea/Tarouba, Les Effort East/Cipero, Les Efforts West/La Romain, Marabella East, Marabella South/Vistabella, Marabella West, Mon Repos/Navet, Pleasantville, Springvale/Paradise (EBC, 2002. Map of the Municipal Corporation Electoral Area of San Fernando Showing its Division into Nine Electoral Districts).
17 San Fernando's elite families have often put forward candidates at local government and national elections. Candidates have included Winston Mahabir, Roy Joseph, Lionel and Ruth Seukeran, Errol Mahabir, Robert and Gerard Montano and Satyakama Maharaj. San Fernando's electoral history is intertwined with the history of its elite families', their political influence and business fortunes.
434 votes. In the last election in 2002, the PNM won by a margin of 1% or 1,775 votes with its candidate gaining 50.7% of the vote and the UNC candidate 49.3%\(^\text{18}\).

Table 1: Election Results: San Fernando West 1956-2002\(^\text{19}\).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Election Year</th>
<th>Electorate</th>
<th>Party 1</th>
<th>Votes</th>
<th>Margin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>PNM</td>
<td>50.7%</td>
<td>1,775</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>UNC</td>
<td>8,244</td>
<td>434</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>PNM</td>
<td>9,176</td>
<td>943</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>PNM</td>
<td>7,748</td>
<td>1,288</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>PNM</td>
<td>6,934</td>
<td>1,847</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>NAR</td>
<td>8,958</td>
<td>5,823</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>PNM</td>
<td>6,231</td>
<td>4,510</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>PNM</td>
<td>6,575</td>
<td>995</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>PNM</td>
<td>5,823</td>
<td>3,795</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>PNM</td>
<td>4,577</td>
<td>3,057</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>PNM</td>
<td>4,441</td>
<td>3,779</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>PNM</td>
<td>4,395</td>
<td>3,407</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


\(^{19}\) This data is compiled from Ryan (2003, 121), 50 Years of the Vote and EBC reports.
Census data published in 2002 give the total population of Trinidad and Tobago as 1,262,400 and Trinidad as 1,208,282. Having almost doubled over ten years, San Fernando’s population is now 55,419 (28,325 women and 27,094 men), and is larger than Port of Spain’s by just over 6,000 persons (CSO 2000). The city comprises about 4% of the nation. Nationally, the population is self designated as 37.5% African, 40% Indian and 20.5% “mixed”. Less than one percent identify as White, Chinese or “Other”. In San Fernando, the population comprises 19,065 Africans (9,574 men and 10,031 women), 16,658 Indians (8,012 men and 8,646 women), 11,317 mixed persons (5,344 men and 5,973 women), 310 Chinese, 45 Syrian/Lebanese, 340 Caucasian and 119 who identify as ‘other’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>San Fernando</td>
<td>55,419</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African</td>
<td>19,065</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>16,658</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>11,317</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christians</td>
<td>30,363</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindus</td>
<td>3,405</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td>2,822</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Trinidad and Tobago’s almost equal numbers of women and men are dispersed among many different religions. Nationally, 26% are Roman Catholic, almost 8% Anglican and 3% Presbyterian. Hindus comprise 22.5% of the population and Muslims 5.8%. In San Fernando, there are 13,961 Roman Catholics, 5,649 Anglicans, 3,582 Orthodox Baptists, 3,447 Pentecostals and 3,724 Presbyterian Congregationalists. There are 2,778 Hindus who are members of the Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha and just 627 who are not. Amongst Muslims, 1,457 belong to the Anjuman Sunnat al Jamaat and 1,365 belong to other Islamic groups. All other denominational groups number less than 2,000 (CSO 2000, 37-39).
2007 marks over 30 years of complete self-rule for Trinidad and Tobago. Tension between classes and ethnicities, competition to dominate a “winner take all” electoral system (Ryan 1999), recurring promises regarding constitutional reform, patronage, and examples of “one-man” authoritarian-style leadership pepper this history. Strikes and rebellions against the government and upper classes throughout the colonial period and in the 1970 “Black Power” fervor (Ryan, Stewart and McCree 1995), and an attempted coup in 1990²⁰ (Ryan 1991) suggest a continuum along which power and authority have been and continue to be contested.

Generally in the population, women’s unemployment rates remain higher than men’s. Additionally, women continued to be limited by a sexual division of labour that concentrates them in a limited range of occupations (UNECLAC 2001, 9). Politically, women’s participation in the election machinery of political parties has grown, though they continue to have lesser say than men at policy levels (UNECLAC 1995, 15-16). However, trade union, pan-African, pan-Indian, religious, feminist, women’s and other movements continue to engage the state.

Nonetheless, Trinidad and Tobago has experienced relative peace and stability throughout the twentieth century. In San Fernando, policing, marketing, religion, Carnival and community have all been historically significant, shaping women and men’s social, economic and political lives. They signal a long, popular engagement with consumption, production, moral codes, order and artistry. I now descend to just one spot within each of these fields and describe how they appear today.

²⁰ The Jamaat al Muslimeen, a radical Islamic group with little popular support in Trinidad and Tobago, attempted the failed, violent coup.
The San Fernando Central Market can be reached by any number of streets, but is mainly accessed from the top of High Street. The street is filled with the sounds of people “hustling a dollar” and making their way to and from work. Just before the market, a long disjointed row of vendors selling “produce” (fruit and vegetables) stands between and in front of vehicles, calling out their prices and keeping an eye out for police. The road then stretches past the San Fernando Jama Masjid and reaches to Sutton Street where not more than two minutes walk away around the corner, the Lionel Jagessar and Associates Mas Camp is located.

2.3.1 Life Outside the San Fernando Central Market

The Central market was first established in the early 1900s. It moved from near the top of High Street in 1912 (where the Carnegie Free Library now stands) and was rebuilt on its
The present site in 1916 (Anthony 1988, 256). The original iron beams still form the market's exoskeleton. The market population of three to four hundred vendors is highly heterogeneous. Among other distinctions such as ethnicity and religion, goods sold, relation to space, and days spent selling there differentiate individuals and groups.

Throughout the history of the place, vendors have always sold on the streets, sometimes to a greater extent than others. Street vending in San Fernando in general has been noted since 1842 (Ottley 1971, 17). Vendors have congregated on the current stretch of road for about ten years. Nine of the vendors I interviewed have been selling out on this stretch between one and five years. Seven have been selling there for six to ten years. One reported selling sixteen to twenty years. She included the years when vendors also sold on streets along the side of the market. It is fascinating that this weekly 'hide and seek' play between police and vendors has continued this long.

The ground floor of the market transforms between 3.45 pm and 4pm from a colourful, undulating spectrum of goods to a flattened sea of stalls blanketed by brown crocus bags and tarpaulin. A few come out from the morning time to sell on the road. The majority have left the road to go home by six to six-thirty pm. On Tuesdays, Fridays and Saturdays, I observed an average of thirty or so vendors who regularly sell on the road.

The politicians, police, local government officials and law together represent formal power and they are the clear authority over the public space of streets and pavements. Regulation of public space is also based on particular notions of morality. The vendors, like those on the wharf, must rely on informal negotiating and personalizing strategies to find a place in the system. They manage to problematise the very notion of the road as a particular kind of public space and to stretch it to take on the other mores more meaningful to them. This heterogenous group negotiates legality both among themselves and with the police by continually testing where they sell alongside the road, times they can sell on the road, amounts they can sell, and how they interact with police while there.
The City Police\textsuperscript{21} are empowered to stop roadside vending by a few key pieces of legislation. The majority of subsections are contained within the Municipal Corporations Act 21 of 1990. This Act governs Local Government in San Fernando and the City Corporation’s administration of the city. The Act does not also govern the Central Police. These officers cannot charge persons under the Municipal Act unless there are special circumstances or they are acting with or as the City Police. National legislation also gives the City Police power to regulate vending that they deem illegal. Both City Police and Central Police can charge vendors under these pieces of legislation.

Under the national legislation, the relevant sections and sub-sections include:

1. The Summary Offences Act, Chapter 11.02, Section 64 (1)n of 2000. This empowers the police to remove “footway obstruction”.
2. The Highways Act, Chapter 48:01, Section 54 (1)e. This makes “pitching” a stall on the road illegal.
3. The Highways Act, Chapter 48:01, Section 50 (1). This section regulates against street obstruction.

Under the Municipal Corporations Act, Chapter 21 (1990), the relevant sections and subsections are mainly:

1. Section 199 (1). This enables the police to regulate the selling of fresh meat and fish.
2. Section 199 (2). This section refers generally to other marketable commodities. “Marketable commodities” are defined under Section 187(1)
3. Section 200 (1). Here, the subsection specifically prohibits selling within a one and a half mile radius of the market.

The police manifest both legal and moral authority when moving the Mucurapo Street vendors. The majority view marketing on the street as unhygienic. Limited space is also

\textsuperscript{21} I interviewed a group of helpful City Police officers, consisting of one Indo-Trinidadian and three Afro-Trinidadian men, and one Afro-Trinidadian woman for just over an hour. In contrast to the City Police, the Central Police are the San Fernando branch of the national police.
left for pedestrians, many of whom riskily walk along the side of the road anyway. Police also argue that vendors risk being hit by cars and robbed on the road.

Generally, vendors are willing to break the law because they bring a different set of values to their activities. In challenging governmental conceptions of appropriate use of space, they also challenge its conceptions of public morality. When vendors successfully negotiate with police, and (in this instance) make public space noisy, crowded or dirty, they momentarily re-define the notion of public space and the contested space of the road itself on their own terms. Newspaper reports suggest that politician-led police crackdowns are inconsistent, and politicians and police are at best ambivalent. Widespread ambivalence, and even tolerance, also exists among customers of all economic strata. All this suggests why vendors are able to negotiate with the police, why other citizens patronize them, and why even politicians are aware of depriving them of their “dollar”.

What makes the experiences of San Fernando Central Market vendors nationally generalisable? First, market vendors in San Fernando reflect a much wider catchment group than expected. The majority resides outside of San Fernando in more ‘rural’ or ‘semi-urban’ areas of South Trinidad. These areas include Hermitage, Monkey Town in Barrackpore, Piparo, La Romaine, Palmiste, Siparia, Point Fortin, St. Madelaine, Princes Town and, especially, Penal. They migrate daily to the city’s market. The culture of marketing discussed here reflects a much larger population base than simply that residing in the city. The market also exemplifies how San Fernando more generally acts as a catchment area.

Second, not only are vendors very mobile, many sell at different markets on different days, or have immediate family members selling at different markets in Siparia, Point Fortin, Marabella, Princes Town, Barrackpore and Debe. This suggests great interaction among vendors from different parts of the country at main markets. Decades of

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newspaper reports present conflicts over street vending as a national issue for major population centres across the country. The relationship examined here between vendors and the state may also compare with markets in Sangre Grande, Arima, Tunapuna, San Juan, Chaguanas, Mayaro, Rio Claro, San Fernando and Port of Spain. While the sample group for this study is small, aspects of their lives overlap with others and suggest relevance for a wider population.

2.3.2 Comparative Experiences Internationally and Regionally

As in many other parts of the world, street vending in Trinidad has a bad reputation. State officials and national elites describe vendors as "disordered", "bad", "deviant", a "plague" and "eyesore", as wrongly occupying streets, and as creating unfair "disloyal competition" (Duneier 1999, 234). While I specifically look at market vendors in the city of San Fernando, a more international view therefore suggests that street vendors selling just about anything have similar experiences (Szanton 1972, Cross 1998).

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23 1975 - "Police Plan Drive To Move Vendors From Pavement", Express, November 27, 1975, p. 27.
1985 - "Vendors on the Run Again as City Police Resume Campaign", Trinidad Guardian August 9, 1985, p. 3.
2000 - "Roadside Vendors Still Struggling to Survive", Express, October 2, 2000, p. 3.
Internationally, vendors are an extremely heterogeneous group. However, throughout their discussions, writers on the subject continue to note the tension between the more formal private sector and this informal sector occupation, and the common stereotypes used to justify regulating the latter (Witter 1989). These stereotypes are particularly applied to sidewalk vendors of all kinds. This is because their activities may not only be informal, but illegal as they habitually defy zoning and health regulations (Witter and Kirton 1990).

The informal sector is defined here in terms of “activities which are not carried out under the rules imposed by political powers” (ibid, 75). Scholars seem to accept that vendors’ attitudes and values are influenced by mores that are rooted in their own lives. For example, Simmonds (1987, 4) described how Jamaican higglers “small up” and make room for each other because they all understand that “each of us must make a living”. Lloyd-Evans and Potter (1992, 83) also see Trinidadian informality as a “way of life” and as “a lifestyle which has been pre-conditioned by colonial, economic and social traditions”. This work ethic values self-employment, flexibility of work hours, accessible entry, and the freedom to participate in social activities or to lime24.

Vendors’ own views therefore present “competing legalities” (Duneier 1999, 231). Also reflecting competing authority, vendors may honour common, mutually-advantageous rules about sharing and claiming space, and keep police out of disputes by relying on shared bases for agreement. In such instances, vendors’ different strategies and power is significant. As in other Caribbean countries, there is a governmental concern with formality and order which is at odds with the nature of informal employment. Yet, as in other aspects of enforcement, implementation isn’t always consistent with what appears on paper (ibid, 244). The number of permanent, illegal structures along roads, highways and outside of markets suggests general governmental tolerance of or at least inconsistent government policy toward informal trading. This is particularly true for lower-income and rural areas (Lloyd-Evans and Potter 1992, 108).

24 “Lime” is a Trinidadian word meaning to socialize or hang out (Lieber 1981, Eriksen 1990).
2.3.3 Out on de Road: Ethnographic Considerations

Over a period of approximately eight months, I went to the market on Tuesdays, Fridays and Saturdays. I would go to the market at about one o’clock in the afternoon when sales slowed and chat with vendors until about 3.30pm when they started to pack up. Then I would stand out on the road with them until 5.30pm. I stood on the road with vendors, joked, fetched bags or drinks, and helped them sell.

Usually, I observed thirty to thirty-five vendors selling on the road. The majority were Indo-Trinidadian women. The next largest number was Afro-Trinidadian and mixed or ‘Spanish’ (Khan 1993) women and then Indo-Trinidadian men. Afro-Trinidadian and mixed or ‘Spanish’ men were the smallest group. In all, eighteen market vendors participated in in-depth interviews that took place near the very end of fieldwork. The interviews generally took one and a half hours. Partially, this is because I only asked questions in between customers, and waited or helped when a vendor was selling to someone. Usually, I could interview no more than two vendors in one day.

I only interviewed vendors who sell on the road, but their stalls are scattered throughout the three market floors. They therefore reflect a self-selected cross-section of vendors. I interviewed fifteen women and three men. Of the thirteen Indo-Trinidadians, one was male. Of the four Afro-Trinidadians, an equal number were male and female. One woman was “mixed”. In the group, there was one teenager, one person in their twenties, five in their (late) thirties, two in their forties, seven in their fifties and two in their sixties. The majority of the group were women between 40 and 55 years of age. This was the average age of the group as well. Two of the three men were in their fifties and one in his thirties.

Six of the vendors I interviewed paid monthly for their ground floor stall. This included an Indo-Trinididian couple, two Indo-Trinididian women and two Afro-Trinididian women. Twelve of the group were daily paid. Six of these were from the third floor and six from the second. The majority on the third floor were females and all on the second floor were Indo-Trinididian females. While the ground floor comprised monthly paid
stalls and the second floor daily paid stalls, daily paying vendors generally spread bags or tarpulin on the ground of the third floor.

I also conducted five interviews with one past Mayor, one past Deputy Mayor, the present Mayor, five City Police and the Market Administrator or Clerk. Other than two City Police, this group was entirely male. I also gathered secondary source material such as census data, City Corporation records and extensive newspaper clippings. Interviews with market vendors were essentially concerned with vendors’ values, their perception of roadside vending and their interaction with police. Interviews with persons in authority focused on their views of market vendors and roadside vending. I wanted to get a sense of each side’s view of themselves, the other and the contested public terrain.

2.4 Voters of the ASJA San Fernando Jama Masjid

Only a few hundred feet past the market, the San Fernando Jama Masjid represents a very different catchment site. The masjid is part of the national, Islamic, Anjuman Sunnatul Jamaat Association (ASJA). Muslims from all over San Fernando and outlying areas
attend Friday namaz here. Although Islam first came to Trinidad with enslaved Africans (Campbell 1974), by the middle of the nineteenth century their community presence had disappeared (Samaroo 1988). Its resurgence came with indentured Indians’ arrival in 1845. Of the 144 000 Indians brought to Trinidad and Tobago during the indentureship period, approximately 23 600 were Muslim (Ali 1995, 7). These new immigrants brought an Indian Islam with significant differences from Middle Eastern Islam (Samaroo 1987). This shaped Islamic culture as it developed in Trinidad. However, as Brinsley Samaroo (1988, 7) notes, with the revival of Islam in the Middle East, missionaries trained there began attempts to “de-Indianize the faith” (ibid, 7). Indian Muslims brought a variety of practices and ideological differences to the colony. They later played a leading role in the movement for independence while remaining committed to community persistence and religious observance.

Samaroo (1988, 11) points out that key concern centres on question, “How do we preserve a Muslim identity in a predominantly non-Muslim state?” He highlights how this question has been addressed through the establishment of mosques, maktabs (Islamic classes), organisations and schools, singing of ghazals and qasidas, performance of hajj, and regular contact with international Islam throughout the twentieth century. However, he does not discuss the deep significance of gender relations to maintenance of community boundaries. In the following pages, I therefore dig deeper to see what links are revealed. I especially focus on this religious association’s Executive Council election and what it highlighted about conceptions of citizenship, community and enfranchisement.

2.4.1 Islam in Trinidad and Tobago: Historical, Community and Gender Dimensions

There are many Islamic organizations in Trinidad and Tobago. However, the ASJA represents the largest group of Muslims in the country. According to the 2000 census, membership comprises approximately 25 297 (12 196 females and 13 101 males), out of
a total 64 648 Muslims (30 723 females and and 33 925 males) in Trinidad and Tobago.25 Within this, the ASJA membership is primarily Indo-Trinidadian, as is the Trinidadian Islamic population as a whole. Conceived as early as 1931, the ASJA was incorporated by an Act of Parliament in 1935. This new organisation prioritized propagation and practice of orthodox Islam, leadership of imams, and synchronization and strengthening of customary practices26 (Teelucksingh 2003).

There has been an elected President General of the ASJA since its establishment. Only men have held all Executive Council positions. There has been much contention over leadership and internal elections in the ASJA (Ali 1992). The San Fernando Jama Masjid was founded in 1913, but was officially established as part of the national ASJA jamaat in 1931. There is a functioning Mosque Board with elected positions such as President, Vice President, Treasurer and Secretary. The Imam of the masjid also sits on the Board. Voting is by consensus. Approximately 150 families currently belong to masjid. This community is primarily Indo-Trinidadian and middle-strata. Census data suggest that there are 2 822 Muslims in San Fernando (1 401 females and 1 421 males), and 1 457 (734 females and 723 males) belong to the ASJA.

An “ASJA Ladies Incorporated”27 is recognized in the constitution of the ASJA. It was established in 1938 and has its complementary constitution (Ali 1995, 31). Its constituency comprises all women in the ASJA. Executive positions are elected. It is positioned parallel to the Executive Council while at the same time being under the oversight of the President General. This association has no formal right to representation on the ASJA Executive Committee. The group’s function is to have regional events and classes, and to help people. In the past, they have worked with other Muslim and non-Muslim women’s groups.

25 These statistics are provisional. The census has not yet been officially published. I believe this is response data, not overall data, only.
27 Reddock (1994) has suggested that the label “ladies”, “reflects the adoption from the British tradition of class-based and moralistic separation between ‘good ladies’ and ‘bad women’”. Kassim (1999) has commented on the contrast between this “ladies” group which was founded as an appendage to the ASJA male executive and the Young Women’s Muslim Association which was formed independently.
The Young Women's Muslim Association (YWMA) is based at the San Fernando Jama Masjid and was established in 1950. It is independent from the ASJA Ladies Incorporated and is in no way directly affiliated with the ASJA. It has no formal right to representation on the Mosque Board. The group has its own Executive with a female President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer and Members. Usually, decisions are made by open voting with a show of hands, but elections go through a process of nomination and secret ballot. Cliques, and personality and family differences may lead to subterranean tension or gossip. However, this is a very social group with some members involved over fifty years.

The group has no mission statement other than that contained in its letterhead: “God hath granted higher to those who strive and fight with their wealth and persons than those who sit (at home) (4:95)”. Traditionally, the YWMA has held events such as lectures, fundraising teas and dinners, iftar and Eid ul Fitr dinners, moulouds, qasida singing, Quranic readings and welcome back events for hajis and hajins returning from Mecca. This “caretaker and caregiver” role is quite typical. Women’s groups at other ASJA masjids also focus on what are described as “women things” such as “cooking and raising money”. Generally women are hesitant to suggest any activities that the Spiritual Leader or Imam would consider unIslamic.

The role of President of the ASJA and of individual Mosque Boards requires interaction with non-Muslims, Muslim men in the community, and male spiritual leaders. It involves leading the jamaat in prayer. These are all considered male roles. At different times over the Mosque Board’s history, representatives of the YWMA have been invited to attend meetings. These are short-lived and sporadic instances usually related to Ramadan or special dinners. Women have also asked to be invited without consistent success. When women attend meetings, they are usually family of Board member, or older and married.

Notions of headmanship among ASJA community members are based on ideas about appropriate gender roles in Islam, but also on larger non-Islamic ideologies that position men as the head of the home and the nation. The experience of women across secular and
spiritual space certainly suggests an informal culture of headmanship that extends from the household to the community to national government institutions. This is key to understanding how dualistic definitions of secular and spiritual space provide only porous community boundaries. Essentially, ideals of spiritually correct leadership are buttressed by support for headmanship in secular life. The ideals of leadership as headmanship are not simply religious but are part of national political culture.

2.4.2 Perspectives on Islam, Leadership, Participation and Gender

There so much writing on women, gender and Islam, exploring 'the Woman Question' yet again can appear cliché. Above all, feminist writing on Muslim women seeks to recognise their agency with the “patriarchal bargain” (Kandiyoti 1988). Following Butler (1997), Mahmood (2001, 203) defines this agency as “not a synonym for resistance to relations of domination, but as a capacity for action that historically specific relations of subordination enable and create”.

Traditional Islamic belief is that men’s primary religious obligation is to support, protect “and lay down the social rules for their women” and family (Hatem 1998, 91). Domesticity, family nurturance and obedience to men are women’s ‘natural’ and religious duties (Esposito 1998, ix). Women are considered to have “equivalent rather than equal rights within the family” (Hijab 1998, 50). Men have greater status, authority, mobility, social control and civil rights.

Gender has been politicised in the Islamic resurgence and reconstruction of ‘authenticity’. Women’s duty is to uphold this ‘authenticity’, propagate generations, and transmit morality and social values (Seikaly 1998, 180). However, class, education and other differences greatly affect how gender complementarity is enforced in daily life (Hadad 1998, 11). Islamic regulations legitimise male domination of civil life. Even when they have won the right to vote, women are rarely considered full citizens or possible representatives. Control of women is central to how “Islamized space” is established.
Yet, scholars document how women critically engage with the regulatory discourses that mark “their bodies and voices by habitual forms of gender subordination” (Ask and Tjomsland 1998, 3). Nonetheless, women’s critical engagements do not necessarily enable them to collectively enter governance structures. This is also true for the women in the San Fernando Jama Masjid.

New notions of femininity intersect reinvented Muslim identities. The literature, therefore, draws on notions of difference and “slippage” between dominant discourses, and individuals’ interpretations and self-presentations (de Lauretis 1987, 10). This illuminating scholarship underscores that it is women’s and men’s choices, and power relations sliced and distributed in various ways, that are at the heart of our inquiry here. The issue is not Islam, but the manifestations of authority that this discourse legitimates.

However, there are ways that the Trinidadian situation does not exactly fit some of the above discussion. The Muslim women in San Fernando all have basic citizen rights. Islam is a matter for personal choice, not a prevailing legal and political system. The nation-state and Islamic community are not coterminous. Secular and national, and religious and transnational discourses (that pre-date the state) are at play here. These women’s identities must be viewed as more than simply Muslim. The Trinidadian setting provides significant context for the construction of religious and other intersecting experiences and identities.

Beginning in the 1980s, Trinidadian feminists began to make women and gender less “hidden from history” (Rowbotham 1973)28. They highlighted the significance of

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28 In the traditional ethnographies on (or including) Muslims (Niehoff and Niehoff 1960; Klass 1961; Smith 1963, Nevadomsky 1984), women feature mainly in relation to sexuality, marriage, ‘traditional’ responsibilities and aspects of cultural change. Yet, these writings give them no active voice. For example, in his study of Indo-Muslims’ cultural resistance, adaptation and assimilation, Smith (1963, 1978) emphasized valued ‘masculine’ attributes such as “strength”, “vitality” and “victory” to describe the Indo-Trinidadian struggle to “win” in “competition” with acculturative forces. He saw orthodox Islam and ‘tradition’, primarily associated with the non-material sphere of family, women and spirituality, as crucial for “retention” (ibid, 195) of a distinct cultural identity.

Yet, Smith’s work almost wholly ignores Indo-Muslim females’ experiences and views28. Interestingly, Smith’s discussion describes how womanhood provided a symbolic marker of internal boundaries, a site for retention of patriarchal religious culture and the basis for a distinct and defined Indo-
discourses of reputation and respectability, and male honour and female shame. These were seen as central to understanding inter- and intra-ethnic relations, and "the competition among patriarchies" (Mohammed 1994). Following Mohammed's theorization of interlocking processes of creolisation and modernity, Sampath's (1993, 250) analysis reinforced how "control of acceptable modernity" is set by terms "engendered by masculinity". The persistence of the gendered spaces and roles must be understood in this historical context.

2.4.3 Inside Looking Out: Ethnographic Considerations

My initial observations and analyses are primarily derived from eight weeks spent with an election strategizing team based at the masjid. A total of ten men and women were part of this active campaigning team. The majority of men were leaders in their masjids, and sat on their Mosque Board or acted as Imam. The two women mainly involved were experienced political activists, and members of other masjids. After these weeks, I continued to attend events at the San Fernando Jama Masjid and some meetings of the masjid's Young Women's Muslim Association (YWMA) for almost one year.

I took and typed minutes at campaign meetings, filed documents and was able to ask a limited number of questions. Access was made significantly easier through an extended family member's friendship with the Masjid President, an invitation to participate extended by a politician involved with the mosque, and the high esteem with which my father's brother, an Islamic scholar, was held among San Fernando Muslims. I was introduced both as student researcher and as "Maulana's niece". Both these designations, the first attributing a kind of male honour as a scholar and the second de-sexing me as

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Muslim identity. He explores Islamic leader Ameer Ali's (1930s-1940s) proposals for reform. Ali argued for women's equality in religious and social life. Smith pointed out that Ali's ideas became very unpopular because Indo-Muslims were not ready for changes that seemed to threaten their sense of ethnic distinctiveness (1963, 179). This is an early reference to the way that proposed changes to female mobility, public participation, behaviour and appearance were directly connected to feelings of assimilation and loss of cultural identity. Like the other ethnographers, Smith's discussion only implicitly highlights how gender has been centrally located within Indo-Muslims' notion of 'belonging'.
young, unmarried ‘daughter’ figure highlighted the significance of gender relations to my participation.

I did not enter the San Fernando Jama Masjid community intending to write about women. However, over the course of the election strategizing meetings, I began to observe who participated and was consulted, and how issues were framed. No women’s names were suggested for the slate of nominees for the election. Elections were not considered women’s matters. Further, no women could vote nor attend the election. This was not treated as an issue even as possible disenfranchisement of (men from) certain jamaats caused a great deal of bitterness and inflamed passions.

How could male masjid members so struggle and strategize for the right to vote in the upcoming election, and yet treat women’s complete and historical disenfranchisement in the ASJA as a non-issue? Questions developed as I observed the Young Women’s Muslim Association’s meetings and regular voting over group decisions or to choose a new Executive. In order to further explore women’s and men’s feelings regarding enfranchisement, I later interviewed eight men and nine women associated with the masjid, the YWMA, the ASJA or the election. I particularly included women and men in leadership positions and experience in community governance.

2.5 Mas Makers in the Lionel Jagessar and Associates Mas Camp

Figure 8: Bandleader Lionel Jagessar Making his Mas
Turning right on the corner just past the masjid, and then crossing Sutton Street leads to the doorway to the Lionel Jagessar’s and Associates Mas Camp. Mas makers are women and men who spend about half a year preparing costumes for their Carnival ‘band’ or group of costumed masqueraders. There are hundreds of these ‘mas’ (masquerade) bands. Each led by their own bandleaders. In smaller bands, the bandleaders will often ‘play mas’, in huge, specially decorated costumes with wheels, as King and Queen of the Band. Mas bands may each consist of a dozen, hundreds or a few thousand women and men who will ‘play mas’ on the streets for two days.

While the biggest Carnival bands are in Port of Spain, San Fernando and smaller areas, such as Carapichima, are also famous for celebrations there. Carnival culminates on the Monday and Tuesday before Ash Wednesday, which marks the beginning of the Lenten period. The festival has long been the quintessential symbol of Trinidadian national culture and identity. The state is the primary sponsor of Carnival activities and competitions in addition to its regulatory role.

2.5.1 Look De Band Coming: Lionel Jagessar and Associates’ Beginnings

In Trinidad, Indian mas was observed as early as the 1840s (Cowley 1996, 36). In the early twentieth century, it was one of the most popular bands (Crowley 1956, 205-213). Red Indian mas emerged from “Warahoon” tribe of aboriginal natives of Venezuela who traded with Trinidad until the 1920s. Red Indian mas included red clothing and face paint. Fancy Indians derive mainly from Red Indians, but are associated with large, elaborate feather and wire headpieces.

29 Masquerading or ‘playing’ in a masque (locally described as ‘mas’) band does not necessarily involve wearing a mask but is based on wearing a costume “based on a theme from history, current events, films, Carnival tradition, from the imagination, or from a combination of these” (Crowley 1956, 194). Mas man Peter Minshall describes ‘mas’ as, “portraying a thing, or idea, or mood, or character the costume or structure is meant to represent...moving in a mas, dancing, miming, presenting what is worn or carried...It is performance...in an environment that is often spontaneous and chaotic” (Minshall 1999, 30). He goes on to add, “In Trinidad, we inevitably speak of ‘playing a mas’. We do not say, ‘What mas are you going to wear?’ We say, ‘Wha’ mas yuh goin’ an play?’ And the mas we play even in the most fun of bands has a character, a sense of dramatic personage, or mood, or symbolic representation” (ibid, 30).

30 Crowley’s article comprises extensive description of various kinds of Indian mas and can be referred to for more than I summarize here.
While Carnival has been associated with Afro-Trinidadian tradition and culture, Indian mas has always been popular with Indo-Trinidadians. Over the last century, Indo-Trinidadians would come to play in San Fernando from areas estates in areas such as Princes Town, Gasparillo, Point Fortin and Fyzabad. Since the 1980s, San Fernando has increasingly been considered the centre of Red Indian mas (Bacchus 1984, 143). Interestingly, no literature explores whether Indo-Trinidadian participation in this mas is heightened by their easy identification with the double meaning (Indo-Trinidadian and Native American) of word the “Indian”.

My own observations and the Jagessars’ telling of Indian mas history fit with Crowley’s (1956) view that the costumes reflect “comic books, National Geographic and other magazine illustrations, and particularly cowboy-and-Indian movies”. Indian mas is currently considered “traditional” because the same masquerade is redesigned and played every year. However, unlike Authentic versions, Fancy Indian mas is now designed in any variety of colours. While there are obvious parallels with portrayals of Native American characters in New Orleans Mardi Gras, Trinidad’s portrayals largely have emerged independently.

The Lionel Jagessar and Associates Fancy Indian Band and camp officially started in 1978 and celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary in 2003. Rose and Lionel Jagessar head an Indo-Trinidadian, Hindu family from San Fernando with two sons and two daughters. Some of the early friends involved in forming the band resided in areas outside of San Fernando such as Fyzabad, Debe and Penal. One ‘section’ was from Pleasantville. In the beginning, the band played Authentic Indian mas. The majority of mas players now wear Carnival style headpieces that could be typical of any band. Whole sections play “bikini mas” with Indian mas styled arm, leg, neck and waist pieces. In contrast to the Jagessar band which does “fancy Indian mas”, smaller bands coming from La Romaine, Pleasantville and one or two areas around San Fernando, all play “authentic Indian mas”.

What does this mean? Why take it for granted?
The Jagesser’s describe their Indian mas as “Fancy” or “pretty mas” because they use colourful velvets and shiny sequins and foil. Fancy mas contrasts to Authentic mas\textsuperscript{31} which uses less shiny materials and relies more on cloth, beadwork and feathers. Their authenticity doesn’t necessarily imply exact representation, but what Crowley calls “authenticity-plus”. This describes “costumes more beautiful than the originals but still authentic in detail” (ibid, 213). The authenticity of costumes can also be judged not by their original, but by their coherence with the Carnival tradition of mimicry, adoption and transformation of outside cultural influences, and relevance to contemporary society (Minshall 1985a, 12).

Fig 9: The Band Leads the King

The ‘mas camp’\textsuperscript{32} is family-run. It relies on family’s and friends’ “love for (Indian) mas” to produce the annual San Fernando-based band. I show how the state also attempts to harness and control this commitment to participation. Expression of ‘national’ culture

\textsuperscript{31} Crowley (1956b, 87) aptly notes that “authentic” mas designs are actually authentic to mas interpretations of the original, not the original itself.

\textsuperscript{32} A room or shed where Carnival masquerade costumes are made.
therefore becomes a point of negotiation between mas makers\textsuperscript{33} and the state. As committed artists, mas makers not only participate, but lead, create and continuously redefine expressions of Trinidadianness. This role carries status. Mas makers continuously reappropriate the notion of Trinidadianness even while engaging with the state as it tries to do the same. These connections provide a basis for understanding the relationship, between the San Fernando Carnival Committee (SCC) and bandleaders. This is a scenario where authority based on Trinidadianness and participation contests authority based on patronage, legislation and facilitation of market imperatives.

2.5.2 Repression to Regulation: State Approaches in Carnival History

The San Fernando Carnival Development Committee changed to the San Fernando Carnival Committee (SCC) in 1987 when the national Carnival Development Committee changed to the National Carnival Commission (NCC)\textsuperscript{34}. The SCC is ‘regional’ subgroup of the NCC. Since 1987, when the government decided to ‘zone’ various Carnival Development Committees, those involved in governance of San Fernando Carnival have resented being defined as a ‘region’. Past committee member Vernon Leotaud articulated a common feeling that San Fernando is not like other, smaller regions such as Princes Town or Chaguanas. This sentiment is still heard among current members of the SCC.

The committee is generally not satisfied with the amount of funding coming from the NCC and the city’s designation as any other ‘regional’ Carnival. Currently, the committee gets an annual subvention of TT$230 000\textsuperscript{35}. The SCC’s grant only pays for prizes and the committee must seek out additional private sector support. The San Fernando Carnival Committee functions as a committee of the San Fernando City Corporation, which is the local government body. Among other responsibilities, the committee sets competition regulations, provides prizes, sponsors events, and regulates the flow of people and traffic on Carnival Monday and Tuesday.

\textsuperscript{33} There are a wide variety of people participating in Carnival including singers, musicians, producers, wire benders, seamstresses, bar operators and others. I focus only on mas makers in this chapter.

\textsuperscript{34} This change did not become legalized until 1991.

\textsuperscript{35} This is the 2004 figure when fieldwork was undertaken.
Seen in historical perspective, there has been a clear change from repression to regulation of Carnival. Attempts to put down forms of masquerading and masking in San Fernando are noted as early as 1859, and again in 1871, 1876, 1881, 1884 (Cowley 1996). Revellers consistently resisted. There was a significant shift away from abolition and toward strict regulation of Carnival in 1882. Laws and Ordinances in both Port of Spain and San Fernando introduced between 1868 and 1895 increasingly aimed to reshape Carnival into more acceptable forms (Cowley 1996, 131).

The Carnival of 1900 witnessed first steps toward it being accepted by middle and upper classes, and small numbers of Indians, Chinese, Syrians and Portuguese. This more "sanitized" Carnival was now on the road to becoming considered a "national" festival (ibid, 343). 1919 was the first year Carnival was officially in the hands of middle class organizers. By the early 20th century, organized competitions, letters to the press and Government-appointed committees were all directed toward making masquerading and music (ibid, 353) more acceptable to all classes. San Fernando officially celebrated eighty-six years of Carnival in 2005. Despite the long record of Carnival in San Fernando, it is striking that these celebrations begin its history from the moment of state and elite take over.

From the mid-1940s, government officials and merchants continued to consolidate middle class influence (ibid, 368). Some have argued that it is independence itself, and this associated expansion of democratic participation and cultural self-assertiveness, that weakened the confrontational nature of masquerade (Wuest 1990, 52). With the coming to power of the PNM in 1956, the Central Government appointed a state financed Carnival Development Committee. From 1957, this committee took responsibility for organizing Carnival and its competitions all over the country. 1957, therefore, marks the Central Government’s steps to officially take over and nationalize Carnival (Hill 1984). Government endorsement and sponsorship was tied to rules and regulations. It controlled all the major competitions and staged events, and universalised an "official" format for

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36 Due to the efforts of the Borough Council and a special committee headed by L.C. Wharton, the first organized Carnival competitions were held on March 3, 1919 at Paradise Pasture. (Ottley 1971, 128).
Carnival. It was concerned with bureaucratic efficiency, rules, control of venues and police security.

This emphasis collaborates with official pressure for "proper" and marketable visibilities. "Carnival is big business" competes with the saying "all ah we is one" (Aching 2002, 78). The shift to governmental management, emphases on tourism and business, and the dominance of pretty and unthreatening mas marks a key historical change from discourses of resistance to those of commodification. As Carnival is increasingly seen as a cultural industry, state discourse has also shifted to emphasise ‘development’, ‘management’ and ‘facilitation’.

It is this contemporary thrust that I most fully explore by looking at the SCC’s governance of Carnival in the city. The festival’s designation as “national” is used both to give the state authority to make decisions and to promote nationalism itself - through the promotion of certain kinds of participation. However, as I show, notions of participation in fact facilitate other relationships to mas, nationalism, artistry, profit, culture and the state.

2.5.3 Scholarship on Mas Camps

Usually, Carnival is explored in terms of tradition, resistance, mimicry and inversion, national identity, ethnicity, bacchanal and freedom. As part of an extensive debate, literature also looks at the relationship between Carnival and ‘national’

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37 Keith Nurse (1999, 672) colourfully describes this: “Since the 1970s the carnival has been promoted, at home and abroad, either as the ‘Greatest Show on Earth’ or a ‘Trini Party’ and, as such, much emphasis was placed on multiracial harmony (‘national unity’), colourful pageantry (‘carnival is colour’), fun-loving lyrics (‘soca party’) and body-revealing costumes (‘bum bum time’).
culture. More recently, writing has focused on commodification, diasporic recreations, state sponsorship, masculinity and gendered performance. Generally, Carnival is dualistically understood in relation to other times of the year and, especially, religiously defined periods. Scholarship has also frequently understood Carnival in pre-independence terms when the state repressed rather than endorsed and identified itself and the nation with Carnival.

Clearly, the post-independence relationship between the state and mas makers is also about cooperation, sponsorship and consultation. Few works theorize contemporary state approaches to mas and mas makers’ responses to the state. Of these, John Stewart’s (1986) discussion of the Carnival Development Committee’s state control of Carnival overly portrays only one side of the story, and misses other elements of negotiation over authority that this study illustrates.

There is little theoretical work on Indian. Scholarship on Indian mas has generally not explored mas making and mas camps, nor has much been said about Indo-Trinidadian participation. Bellour and Kinser’s (1998) exploration of Indian mas in San Fernando highlights its history and styles, and the significance of colour choices and notions of authenticity. Lionel Jagessar is mentioned. However, the article compares New Orleans and San Fernando within an African frame, as if local bands are not ethnically mixed.

Of the extensive literature on Carnival, there are only a handful of studies on mas camp life. Mostly doctoral dissertations undertaken in the 1990s, these include “Jump! Jump and Play Mas!” by Patricia Alleyne-Dettmers (1993), “Trinidad Masquerades: Performance, Play and Community in a Post-Colonial Carnival” by Chris Waite (1993) and Thomas Fleming’s (1998) “Rearticulating Tradition, Translating Place: Collective...
Memories of Carnival in Leeds and Bristol. One published paper, “Amerindian Masking in Trinidad’s Carnival” by Helene Bellour and Samuel Kinser (1998) compares Authentic Indian mas in San Fernando to a similar genre in New Orleans, and highlights mas camp life. These studies are primarily based on participant-observation of varying depth. The dissertation by Waite comes closest to examining work ethics, negotiations among mas makers for money or other forms of compensation, and concepts such as liming, hustling, loyalty and leadership. Mas camps have been largely studied in relation to playing mas, Carnival characters, other countries’ Carnivals and notions of memory and place.

2.5.4 Make Mas Den Talk: Ethnographic Considerations

The Jagessars agreed that I would help “work de mas” in exchange for research material. From January, I spent six weeks in the camp. Then, continued to visit camp members for months. The atmosphere in the camp was often loud and jovial. Soca, calypso and, often, chutney music was always playing loudly and people often visited to see the costumes and ‘ole talk’ with the bandleaders. I completed all interviews with camp members in August 2004 and with others concerned with San Fernando Carnival in September 2004.

The family treated me like a daughter. Entry was eased by the fact that their daughter was my age. I was also easily accepted because new people come to the camp each year to help. The majority of data for the chapter is drawn from several interviews with bandleader Lionel Jagessar, and to a lesser extent, partner bandleader Rosemary Kuru-Jagessar, and children Lisa, Larry and Lionel Junior. As well, I interviewed two other Indo-Trinidadian bandleaders, five past members of the Carnival Development Committee and SCC, three current members, and the head of the National Carnival Bands Association. I also interviewed the last elite Carnival organiser before government takeover in 1957. Finally, I collected minutes from almost one year of SCC meetings.
Looking toward the San Fernando King’s Wharf area, I focus on a neighbourhood of squatters who permanently reside on one end generally known as the ‘Railway Line’ (see Map 4). I explore the lives of these residents who work in government programmes for unemployed people. According to the present Local Government Councillor, and past and present Members of Parliament, Wharf residents have always been part of unemployment programmes. Fishing is the most commonly cited skill, but it doesn’t always provide enough or steady income.

In particular, I examine the nation-wide Unemployment Relief Programme (URP) and the Community Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP). The first, administered by the Ministry of Local Government aims to provide temporary employment to those finding it hard to secure paid employment. In comparison, CEPEP is intended to be more than short-term employment relief. It is administered by the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment and aims to “clean and beautify the environment, provide employment for unskilled and semi-skilled workers and develop a cadre of micro-entrepreneurship and new business”.

Figure 10: A URP Worker Spends Time with Her Family
Whereas negotiations over mas show a competition between formal and informal authorities to control and define the informal sphere, life on the Railway Line suggests the opposite. Here, both formal authorities and those in informal life attempt to appropriate and control the formal apparatus and resources of the state. This is a very different picture from the *Masjid* where parallel formal spheres of religious and state citizenship are created. As well, it departs from the market where neither formal laws nor informal practices appear to have ultimate authority over the space of the street.

### 2.6.1 Making the Railway Line Home

The Wharf lies at the very base of the city, and directly faces the sea front. It was once a bustling port and trading post for goods such as rice, sugar and wood. The area was historically famous as a site of Carnival, St. Peter’s Day and New Year’s Day activities. It was also famous for its railway from San Fernando to Port of Spain and to Princes Town. A Public Transport Service Corporation (PTSC) bus system later replaced the railway. After the railway was discontinued, bus company workers and squatters replaced the railway workers who once lived in houses provided at the end of the line. The houses still had electricity and running water at this time, but soon both railway line workers and those from the bus service moved out. By the 1970s, with the railway gone and the decline of the Wharf as a port, dereliction began to set in. Squatting increased in the front, open section and at the very end of the Railway Line road. After amenities were discontinued in the early 1980s, only squatters were left living along the Railway Line.

The main Wharf and Fish Market area are quite distinct from the Railway Line neighbourhood. ‘Permanent’ residents and families primarily reside on the Railway line. The majority of CEPEP and URP workers belong to this group. Alternately put, many of those living on the Line survive because of CEPEP and URP. There are a few individuals

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50 These routes were established over the last decades of the eighteenth century and tracks were extended to Siparia in the early nineteenth century. In the 1920s, the Trinidad Railway Service merged with the Cipero Tramroad railway company. However, the system only lasted until the 1960s. Its termination was eulogized in the Mighty Dictator’s famous calypso, “Last Train to San Fernando”.

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on the Railway Line working full-time or part-time and a number of people dependent on
social assistance or family members.

The Railway Line road is narrow, badly pitted in places and ends in a cul-de-sac. All the
houses are on one side as the sea is on the other. While there is only one parlour (as
suggested by a large sign), a few other residents also sell cigarettes, rolling paper and
such small items. The majority of the residents I interviewed live along this stretch of
road which extends for a few hundred feet. One lives a little past the end of the road in a
bushy area that can only be reached by crossing a large drain. From here, one can walk
directly to the yacht club and the Marabella side of the Wharf. The smoke stacks of the
Pointe-a-Pierre refinery are a little further distance. Houses along this stretch are
similarly made out of wood, board and galvanize, but some sit on their original stone
foundations.

Those that I interviewed generally first came on the Line through family or friends, or
because they lived in Springvale and would regularly spend time on the Wharf liming or
earning a living. Some belong to two extended families. Those who now live on the Line
may have inherited their house, bought it for anywhere from TT$300 to TT$1500 or built
it from bought and given materials. They may have ‘bought’ the land with the house,
been given it by others holding an informal title or simply squatted. Though houses can
be bought and sold, the entire community is squatting. There is neither electricity nor
running water. Residents’ stories about how they ended up living on the Wharf
essentially suggest that poverty is the common denominator. The majority of those I
interviewed did not finish secondary school, but have primary schooling.

Approximately forty people, including about twenty children, live on the Line and there
are about twenty houses. However, not all are occupied. The population mainly is Afro-
Trinidadian. However, there is one Indo-Trinidadian family and an extended Dougla
(mixed Indo- and Afro-Trinidadian) family. Before the opportunity for work with CEPEP
and in between URP jobs, the majority of residents engaged in temporary employment,
fishing-related activities, informal economic activities or were unemployed. In this sense,
they also share income-levels and occupational mobility with a majority of those involved at the lower-end of the informal economy as well as those that are essentially (income) poor\textsuperscript{51}.

In Trinidad, millions of dollars have been spent and continue to be (Ryan 1997), and thousands (Fraser 2004) have participated in variously-titled programmes over the decades. This group of CEPEP workers is from among two to three groups of seven in the San Fernando West Constituency and from among fifteen within the City of San Fernando’s jurisdiction. Having informally interacted with workers from a few different CEPEP contracting companies, I consider these interviews to reflect shared experiences and perceptions. URP workers I interviewed are only a small number of those temporarily hired in the city, but those that I knew from other areas have comparable stories.

2.6.2 Patronage in International, Regional and National Perspective

Unemployment programmes in Trinidad and Tobago are deeply entrenched in the nation’s political history. As with other Caribbean and Latin American nations, they have doubled as a source for patronage (Lutchman 1992, Mahabir 1979, Martz 1997). This continues. Even before the transition to independence, patronage programmes have been an influential aspect of Trinidad’s politics. They have been considered key to winning elections, subduing protest and crime, and rewarding supporters (Craig 1982, Ryan 1997). Essentially, in a context of high unemployment, economic discontent, scarcity and difficulty accessing social resources, governing parties will be especially able and willing to develop patron-client relations. This occurs through distribution of welfare, employment and income along partisan lines (Stone 1974). Unemployment programmes,

\textsuperscript{51} Godfrey St. Bernard writes, “Families are assigned to lower class strata on the basis of their social position within a given social context. At the national level, this position is determined by family income, family heads’ income, occupation and education, the extent to which families consume luxuries, and place of residence. Poverty, on the other hand, is a function of the conditions under which individuals and families live, and their ability to access social amenities and opportunities that could enhance the quality of life of their lives” (St. Bernard 1997, 248). More simply, Bishnu Ragoonath (1994, 3) defines poverty as “the inability to achieve a decently acceptable standard of living”.
such as the contemporary CEPEP and URP, are probably the single most patronage-identified practice in the history of the country.

A combination of loyalty and reciprocal obligation to paternalist party leaders has characterized Anglophone Caribbean politics (Stone 1974, 1986). As Jacobs (1978, 8) points out, this region is saturated with references to "contacts", "pulling string", "clout" (also Edie 1989, 7), "money talks" and "grease palm". These indicate public familiarity with partisan administration. Party brokers at all levels maintained the system's stability through bureaucratic favours. Control of resources is key to patronage, and moral or legal authority is not necessarily the basis for state legitimacy.

2.6.3 Patronage in Trinidad and Tobago

In 1957, the ruling government, and specifically the Prime Minister Eric Williams, established the Depressed Areas Programme. Also known as a 'Crash' programme, Susan Craig (1974) writes that it first began in sugar areas as an ad hoc measure to improve things like roads. It later expanded to urban areas such as Laventille and San Juan as an employment programme. Howe and Rennie (1982, 128) argue that it was started in response to warfare among steelbandsmen in areas of Port of Spain such as East Dry River. However, Tony Fraser disputes this and posits that the Crash programme began in Point Fortin to counter stark unemployment and to court voters away from Uriah Butler, a charismatic leader and opponent of Williams (Trinidad Guardian, December 16 2004, p 29).

The Prime Minister's key strategy was to cultivate a direct, personalistic and ad hoc approach to communicating with the population. It is in this context that the Crash programme that began in the 1960s was to become crucially important to the relationship between state, political leadership and the unemployed (Craig 1974, 33). MPs often influenced recruitment and the programme itself was vulnerable to the "caprice and power of individual politicians" (ibid, 50). This meant that workers believed they owed
their employment to contacts and patronage (ibid, 49). However, writing of Jamaica, Harewood and Henry observe how those without economic capital may have political capital (1985, 72). This political capital describes groups’ ability to successfully make demands of elites, and to manage political relations to their benefit.

Party activists had the power to make decisions about who participated in Special Works Programmes and how many times they secured short-term employment, and they controlled use of the community centres. They were also the ones counted on to “coerce the constituents for support at election time” (Craig 1974, 64). The local government apparatus of County and Municipal Councils could be entirely sidestepped in this arrangement based on party contacts. Those in other parties or without contacts effectively withdrew participation.

This system of party infiltration also produced party activists who were low ranking patrons. Such persons could bring projects and resources to communities due to their place in the party hierarchy and their own contacts. This infiltration of party organization in communities was also noted, from about the 1950s, by Hauofa (1968) in 5th Company, Moruga, Freilich (1960) in Tamana, Morton Klass (1961) in Felicity, the Niehoffs (1960) in Penal and Grace Bason (1984) in her survey of the Caroni and St. David Counties. It led to open conflict in communities, withdrawal of some individuals on the basis of ‘race’, religion or party affiliation, formation of competing community groups or uneasy peace (ibid, 71). However, rural areas were clearly neglected while urban areas, and especially those along the East-West Corridor and in PNM-loyal constituencies, were favoured (Ryan 1997, 130).

The same relationship earned different names over the decades. These include Special Works, Better Village Development and Environmental Works Division (DEWD), Labour Intensive Development Programme (LIDP), Unemployment Relief Programme (URP) and Employment and Training Programme (ETP). They were all “standpipe” or “parish pump” politics associated with buying votes and were “integrally linked with PNM politics” (ibid, 126). These “political resources” (ibid, 137) were associated with
corrupt practices, waste and abuse of public funds, poor work ethic, violence, mafia style intimidation and racketeering, idleness and low productivity. Up to September 1995, new programmes were being invented. The Urban Renewal Programme, which was to run concurrently with the Unemployment Relief Programme, began at this time. It involved allocating thirty contracts of TT$100 000 each to petty contractors in Laventille (ibid, 139).

When the PNM lost the election a few months later, programmes such as URP continued to be associated with corruption, intimidation, “ghost gangs” and inefficiency (ref) under the UNC government. With the invention of Community Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP), the PNM repeated an election discourse about sustainable employment creation and anti-corruption again in 2002. As I show in later chapters, virtually all political parties which have held government are considered to use patronage. However, given the PNM’s thirty plus years in office, its relationship with patronage is far more entrenched both in popular imagination and in Trinidad and Tobago’s history.

2.6.4 Liming on the Line: Ethnographic Considerations

I spent a year as a participant-observer in the King’s Wharf area. The latter two months were mainly spent interviewing CEPEP and URP workers living on the Railway Line. I began fieldwork on July 14, 2003. This was the day of Local Government elections across the country. Unsure where to begin in a city I didn’t know well, I divided the day between observing activities in the PNM and UNC constituency offices. I spent the morning sitting in the PNM Constituency Office observing the flurry of campaigning activities and chatting with people. One woman I met, and later became friends with, was a CEPEP worker. Several CEPEP workers, and at least two CEPEP bosses, were at the office. The workers were canvassing to see if people on their voter lists had already voted or if they needed transportation to the polling station. About a week later, I met my friend’s job foreman and the rest of her “gang” (officially designated as a “team”) when
they had finished cutting and clearing the grass along the road in front of the Gulf City mall. At least four of her team’s workers, three men and one woman, lived on the Wharf. Another week or so later, the foreman took me to the Wharf to meet people he knew.

Some weeks after the foreman’s introduction to the Wharf, I started going by myself. The challenges of negotiating my safety and participation in male-dominated spaces, and managing notions of reputation and respectability were important aspects of my gendered experience as a researcher. After several weeks, I began to venture further in and to lime with other groups including young people, URP and CEPEP workers, young mothers and couples. I sought relationships with adult women who could act as friends and key informants as I was very aware of gossip that would develop if I was seen as favouring relationships with men.

Among the fifteen residents I interviewed, there were seven URP and eight CEPEP workers. Together, there are nine females and six males. Some CEPEP workers had also worked for the URP in the past. The CEPEP group comprised six Afro-Trinidadian males and two females (one Dougla and one Indo-Trinidadian). The URP workers interviewed were all female. However, they were an ethnically mixed group of two Indo-Trinidadians, two Afro-Trinidadians, two who identified as mixed and one Dougla. The majority of CEPEP and URP workers were between thirty and fifty years old. Members of both groups are mainly Christian (Baptist, Roman Catholic, Anglican and Pentecostal), but at least two persons in each group were Muslim. Combined, ten persons reported being in common-law unions. Family types were essentially nuclear, and centred around a couple and an average of two to three children.

Of the fifteen women and men I interviewed, eleven live on the Railway Line and four on the Wharf. Of these residents permanently residing in the area, five have been living there for seven to ten years, three for eleven to fifteen years, three for sixteen to twenty years and four have been living on the Wharf or Line for over twenty years. Of this group, seven consider themselves belonging to the Railway Line, four consider themselves
belonging to the Wharf and four consider themselves belonging to another area. These areas include Fyzabad, Biche, St. Madeline, Rosillac, Princes’ Town and Springvale.

I conducted thirteen additional interviews with a female URP foreman, male officers from the Central Police and CID, one male CEPEP contractor, a female Executive Member of the PNM San Fernando West Constituency Executive, the past male Member of Parliament for San Fernando West and the present female Member of Parliament for San Fernando West, the male Project Manager at SWMCOL, a past Mayor and past Deputy Mayor of San Fernando (both males), the most recent (2003-2006) male Mayor of San Fernando, a past female Local Government Councillor and the most recent female (2003-2006) Local Government Councillor for Springvale/Paradise. The Constituency Executive member and present Local Government Councillor were also contractors. Five of this group were females and five were Indo-Trinidadians. This group encompassed politicians across a range of levels as well as individuals involved with the Wharf in a range of ways.

Interviews with workers focused on aspects of life on the Line, experiences working with CEPEP and URP, and perspectives of patronage. Interviews with persons in authority focused more on perceptions of the Wharf, and CEPEP and URP. CEPEP contractors tended to give me a lot of official spin, to become somewhat defensive and to assertively justify both the programme and their involvement. Supplementary data included Hansard records, census data and newspaper clippings.

2.7 Conclusion

This sketch of four sites within Trinidad’s social and historical landscape provides the backdrop to this study. It points to the kinds of assertions and contestations I will be highlighting in subsequent chapters. Just looking from this ethnographic moment back across history shows the continual intersection of lore and law in questions of legitimacy.
and participation. The San Fernando Central Market, Lionel Jagessar and Associates Mas Camp, San Fernando Jama Masjid and King's Wharf Railway Line are spaces both intimate and open. They exemplify a whole range of the economic, cultural, spiritual, familial, state-centred, gendered and emotional interactions that make up public life. In this way, they are ideal sites for showing how women and men in catchments and neighbourhoods experience and shape governance.

This study is about how women and men participate in public life, whether on roadsides or roads, in meetings in City Hall and constituency offices, in associational and national elections, or in neighbourhoods and jobs sites. These sites work well to illustrate that the issues explored in this study cross economic strata, gender, religion and ethnicity. A range of internal and outer boundaries may divide these groups. Yet, the analogous ways they live, work, pray and socialise further emphasise how ASJA members' negotiations over authority are not so distant from squatters, bandleaders or market vendors. Alternately, the things that matter most to women and men in one space are expressed through different relations in another, but circle in constantly to return to the value of family, reciprocity, fairness, and participation.

As I have shown, Central Market vendors' tactics draw legislation and police into the picture, whereas mas camp life provides glimpses of how local government institutions and politicians at that level work. Squatters' negotiations over patronage jobs pull the study's lens right up to the elected MP and into several different places in state bureaucracy. Nonetheless, a connected, complementary pattern begins to emerge from these disparate sites. Each depicts politics from "the margins" where legitimacy is being constantly refounded. Each illuminates different versions and combinations of lore and law. Together, they show that authority may be cast and recast by women and men's gender relations, survival needs, leaders' influence or beliefs in God.

While the dispositions emerging from each site repeat in varying forms in the others, each one epitomizes a space where the dispositions find their most powerful value, articulation and meaning. In this sense, these sites also point to the significance of their
differences. All four sites are necessary to understand the homologies among different spheres of social life and stratified groups. The four are also enough to establish a substantial case for my argument about the power of lore and social politics, the progressive privatization of public space, and the everyday workings of aesthetic authority.

These locations additionally illustrate the contribution that a multi-sited ethnography, which moves back and forth through varying spaces, can make. As Gilsen (1990, 187) observes, “Space is crucial in thinking about culture and ideology because it is where ideology and culture take on physical existence and representations”. In the next chapter, I move from this panoramic sweep to a more pedestrian view of the city. Keep in mind the ways that mundane practice balance, weave and blur different kinds of authority. This makes them an excellent starting point for discussing the political significance of habitus.
Chapter Three: Living Politics

3.1 Introduction

Indeed, their yearning for an integrated model of community that can acknowledge yet accommodate difference is an important aspect of the Caribbean's cultural ethos. (Carnegie, 2002, ix)

This chapter enters into the interiors of the sites studied. I now move off the pavement and deep into the high-ceilinged market where vendors sell before moving to the street, away from the election and into conversation about God and leadership, out of City Hall and into the musically-set, countdown pace of costume-making, and beyond the job site to the steps of houses where talk is about the cost of groceries for the week. These sites, discussions and concerns exemplify how normative orders and expectations shape public life. They show the relationships and actions that emerge from and reproduce customary practice and common sense. Actions to fulfill needs, express selfhood, care for others and
feel good about oneself are connected to popular notions about what matters as well as what is considered right and reasonable. They provide a basis for understanding the mix, overlap and flow of formal and informal power described in the next chapter.

Usually, after visiting the wharf during the afternoon hours, I would climb back up High Street and go look for Merlene, Miss Cleo, Dolls, Spanish or other vendors who might still be selling out on the road. After closing with the wharf in the last chapter, I therefore make this trip as I used to do and start again with the stories of market vendors I knew. After describing the different values that primarily appear in each site, I explore ways to understand why and how these organizing principles alter across sites.

3.2 Worlds within a World: Understanding Values, Practices and Relationships

Here, I illustrate the significance of dispositions such as *everybody have to eat, love for mas, return to spirituality* and *contacts*. They are involved in the ways that women and men make decisions, deal with power, negotiate rules and roles on the ground, and share and sort out conflict. They flexibly change meaning as they move through different sites, moments and discourses. Most importantly, these dispositions point to ways that women’s and men’s choices produce patterns of action.

Building towards an argument about aesthetic authority in Chapter 5, I want to show that habitus provides a basis for a moral order not necessarily centred in expectations that women or men will act neutrally, impartially or impersonally in everyday life. Chapter 4 then stretches further to point out how this also orders more formally defined relations.
Read as a story, this study describes aspects of social life that I examine, where I look and who peoples those spaces. Over the next three chapters, I present what they do there, how their actions intersect state and institutional power, and what women and men at different locations say about what they do. The following pages therefore begin by ushering in a deeper look at women’s and men’s practices, and habitus in relation to normative life.

3.2.1 Habitus

Writing in a tradition established by Emile Durkheim (1961 [1925]), Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1953 [1942]) and Marcel Mauss (1992 [1934]), Pierre Bourdieu (1984 [1990]) famously theorized social practices in terms of “habitus”. Less individualistic than ‘habits’, Bourdieu’s emphasis was on the formation of a habitus typical of a group. For example, “taste” is a habitus that creates distinctions within cultures and class groups through the cultural capital mobilized. Cultural capital refers to “practical attitudes, stances, and general schemes of classification that are usually “second nature”” (Valverde 1998, 237).

Bourdieu’s argument is that habitus is generative. It operates beneath the level of consciousness to influence actions and relations. Like language, the basic rules are used unconsciously, but intelligibly. How does habitus work? Starting from childhood, mundane experiences begin to create habitual layers that reference the past and family as well as a range of other concurrent relationships and activities. The schema that develops is therefore a social knowledge that differs across history, place and position of power. It is not static, but can be reshaped and

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1 Bourdieu’s (1984) argument, in Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste, is that economic position and power, and cultural or symbolic power are sources of status, and hierarchical relations. “Symbolic capital” comes from a hierarchy of tastes. Taste is an acquired “cultural competence” that is naturalized and used to legitimize the social distinctions established between groups of people.

2 Bourdieu writes, “One of the fundamental effects of the harmony between practical sense and objectified meaning (sens) is the production of a common-sense world, whose immediate self-evidence is accompanied by the objectivity provided by consensus on the meaning of practices and the world, in other words the harmonization of the agents’ experiences and the constant reinforcement each of them receives from expression — individual or collective (in festivals, for
shifted by particular experiences. For example, a masculine habitus is, perhaps, most determined by early experiences and relationships, but later experiences can make a man reinterpret these, choose to remember and identify with them differently, and even drastically change certain actions.

New experiences and new strata of dispositions may be overlaid over old layers differently. Many men like this may create a changed masculine habitus over generations. Yet, habitus tends to reproduce the dominant values of a group because early layers filter later experiences and new dispositions though collective embodiments such as genres of dress, socializing and conversation, not just individual creativity. The past shapes actions in the present. As Bourdieu writes, the past “functioning as accumulated capital, produces history on the basis of history and so ensures permanence within change” (1990 [1980]: 56).

A habitus is, therefore, a value system or cosmology that provides an underlying framework for women and men’s decisions while being actively engaged through their choices. It does not reflect only one set of norms, but is layered and dynamic, and influenced by diverse encounters and environments. I show how it includes contradictions as well as cohesion, and integration as well as incoherence because it is lived, known and given meaning through practice. In essence, this concept enables us to explore the implicit categories that women and men use to continuously assemble their lived world and these categories’ significance for individual lives and social relations.

Diverse kinds of social relations are, what Bourdieu considers, diverse forms of capital. Different positions are linked to social struggles over access to various forms of capital, including economic, social, cultural and political capital. These are actor-centred, relational forms of power that define women and men’s positions and the relations between them. Those with similar amounts and kinds
of capital have similar forms and amounts of power (position). This creates collective recognition of identity and a sense of being a social group.

Some forms of capital can be converted into others, but they do not necessarily have equal exchange value. For example, cultural capital or good “taste” can be converted into economic capital through access to certain jobs that require this kind of classed knowledge. Symbolic capital, the final kind emphasized by Bourdieu, refers to the power to interpret the social world. Status and prestige create legitimate authority to name, speak for and define the official version of things. This produces an ability to dominate and, therefore, symbolic violence. The unequal value attributed to different kinds of capital enables relations of domination, subordination and equivalence, and stratification.

As I show in the following chapters, the kinds of capital that women and men vendors, mas makers, squatters and associational members access is more nuanced and negotiated than simply class or identity categories suggest. Clearly, even if ways of thinking and forms of power are imposed on more subordinated groups, they do not simply accept them and the social order as just. Similarly, a politics of authority works as it does because of such shifting and unstable registers of power.

The differences produced by forms of capital create “fields”. There may be, for example, educational or legal fields. There are many fields with varying relations to each other and forms of capital may be both general and field-specific. Women and men’s capacity for individual and collective agency is therefore shaped by, “the constellation of forces within the political field…the volume and composition of social capital…and…the possession of symbolic capital (cultural framing)” (Stokkes 2002, 21).

With these concepts in mind, I begin to look at regular happenings in and around the San Fernando Central Market. I have outlined how the key dispositions
explored in this study are grounded in lore. Lore describes a habitus that enables women and men from a range of groups to participate in different fields and to bring different forms of capital to their interactions. One of my goals in this study is to show the forms of power that women and men bring to their order-making practices, and the extent to which they involve contending concepts of legality and legitimacy.

3. 3 Everybody Have to Eat

*Everybody have to eat*, a sentiment often articulated by San Fernando Central Market vendors, expresses the basic value system of marketing culture. Also expressed as “everybody out here to make a dollar” or “everybody have to live”, this concept encompasses other notions such as “looking out for each other” and “all of we live as one”. It is both a social and business ethic and blurs the distinctions between these two. It provides a rationale for vendors’ decisions regarding sharing, cooperation, competition and conflict, and for the ways they negotiate with police and government policy regarding sidewalk vending.
The concept is a "disposition" which influences how women and men creatively respond to their circumstances (Bourdieu 1977, 261). Dispositions are the dominant and enduring beliefs and practices of a group. They are internalized, and shape how women and men think, feel and act. They are then externalized as women and men creatively and individually choose different responses. Choices are limited though by "the possibilities and impossibilities, freedoms and necessities, opportunities, and prohibitions" set by social conditions (Bourdieu 1990 [1980], 54). This why is Bourdieu says that women and men make "virtue of necessity". Agency must be understood within contexts set by class, gender, history, politics and economy.

Similarly, dispositions such as love for mas, return to spirituality and contacts both structure women and men's choices and are structured or reshaped by them. Women and men internalize and externalize their possibilities and prohibitions. They use them to make their actions meaningful, to engage their meanings and to express ideals of order and balance. The San Fernando Central Market provides the first site for exploring how dispositions are lived.

3.3.1 Cooperation, Competition and Conflict

With so many vendors selling such similar goods, the market is a very competitive space. The concept everybody have to eat comprises, among others, an ethic of cooperation based on the reality that "whole day you are here, you have to live like one". Vendors will call therefore each other “neighbour” if they sell near to each other. Others are called “tantie” (auntie) if they are older.

3 In Bourdieu’s words, "The habitus, a product of history, produces individual and collective practices – more history – in accordance with the schemes generated by history. It ensures the active presence of past experiences, which...guarantee the ‘correctness’ of practices and their constancy over time, more reliably than all formal rules and explicit norms...the habitus tends to generate all the ‘reasonable’, ‘common-sense’, behaviours (and only these) which are possible within the limits of these regularities…” (1990 [1980], 54-55).
Vendors who sell next to each other or who have been selling in the market for many years, and who may know each other from their villages, treat the market as a community. In fact, it feels like its own community.

Vendors cooperate by helping others sell, doing little favours like helping a friend or neighbour “pack their stall”, watching each other’s goods, loaning money, bartering, buying wholesale goods together, sharing toilet paper, water, cigarettes or food, sharing scales and storage space, saving better goods for each other, sharing advice, contributing to a *sousou*, providing small change for each other and comparing prices to establish a common rate. Vendors also engage in an informal economy amongst themselves where live chicks and ducklings, and sometimes wild squirrels and parrots that are caught, are sold. Use of one vendor’s scale would be informally traded for space on the other vendor’s stall when needed.

Vendors also barter with each other, sell to each other at cheaper prices and bring each other small gifts of produce. This can help them spend only a little so that they can save more. Lloyd-Evans and Potter (2002, 162) note that working on behalf of others or to improve the overall position of the group is often based on feelings of solidarity and common values. These are particularly important in the informal sector.

Sharing is therefore also based on the usefulness of exchange and reciprocity. Gifts of produce to customers, the Market Clerk and friendly police are also part of this practice. Vendors I spoke to often talked about feeling proud of how they help each other and cooperate, and how that is part of market life because “all ah we come here to get some food to carry home”. If vendors bring young daughters

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4 An informal, cooperative, rotating savings scheme.

5 Social capital is provided by networks based on trust, loyalty and reciprocity. Moser (1996) argues that economic crisis and structural adjustment positively and negatively affect social capital by strengthening it during hardship through reciprocity networks, but also by reducing the ability to help others. Decreasing reciprocity can erode the social networks upon which small informal enterprises are often dependent.

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or granddaughters to sell with them, other female vendors will often keep an eye on these teenagers and give them advice. Members of small groups may also get together outside of the market at weddings, funerals, religious occasions and birthdays. The market is clearly a place for both consumption and sociality.

Family members, including younger and elder sisters, mothers (and to a lesser extent fathers) and daughters (and to a lesser extent sons), sisters in law, grandmothers and their (usually female) grandchildren may sell together. Where women or men don’t sell with family, they often rely on friendship networks, particularly with elder women whom they may know through family or their village. Looking at very old (usually Indo-Trinidadian) women who continue to operate a stall even when their children are professionals who support them, it seems to be more about sociality than livelihood.

Space is one of the key aspects of market life that is shared. In instances when one vendor sells for another, it is customary that the goods’ owner be given all the money. Of the forty or so vendors I knew very well, only Julia charged another for use of her monthly paid stalls on the emptier days of Monday, Wednesday, Thursday or Sunday. This Indo-Trinidian vendor was in her 30s, owned three stalls, and at home owned two televisions, a VCR, a DVD player, a van, and a cell phone among other things. She represented a younger generation of vendors, but also an ethic not simply based on survival needs that everyone must meet.

It is the main custom to share stalls and space for free. However, vendors who do this face possible ‘confusion’ (conflict) from some kind of abuse of the relationship. A vendor may find that the other has left her stall dirty by another she has let share her space or she might not get enough space on her own stall when she comes to sell or she may find out that the vendor has been gossiping about her personal business to neighbouring vendors as they become more friendly.
Vendors' form relationships with each other as well as with customers. They trade *picong* (teasing talk) with customers and tell regulars that they miss them if they have not seen them for a long time. Regular customers also look forward to this atmosphere. Even on the road, while vendors sometimes offer cheaper prices to regulars, customers will also buy from their favourite vendors regardless of price and even tell vendors to keep the change. However, vendors complain that overall people will pay whatever price the grocery calls, but want everything in the market for a dollar. They feel shoppers challenge vendors’ prices as if the vendors don’t have to pay bills and also buy groceries.

Conflicts mainly arise because of jealousy, space, money, gossip, pricing and calling away someone’s customer. Vendors may experience others’ jealousy if their sales are fast or they have managed to sell a lot of their goods. Others talk about how “you are selling with a jumbie or a jinx” to be so successful. Vendors therefore mention squeezing lime on their goods to “cut the blight” caused by “maljo”.

They may sell to each other, but a number had complaints about others who lied about how much the goods weighed and charged them more. Although they share scales, if too much use is made of the scale or it is borrowed too often, the vendor will complain how the other is “too miserable”. Space becomes an issue when one person’s goods may be seen as stacked too high and blocking customers’ view of a neighbour’s goods.

Money may become an issue when vendors sell for each other and one feels that she has not been given all their money. Petty theft between vendors, and others wandering through the market, also occurs. Underpricing is also an issue because it is seen as taking away someone else’s dollar or “trying to run down one another”. It is a complex issue, however, because selling prices are based on buying prices and quality, and the cheaper costs of one’s own garden goods. Una,

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6 This means "bad or evil eye" and comes from the French words *mal yeux*. 

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an older Afro-Trinidadian vendor whose daughter now sells separately in the market, told me that she doesn’t “undersell” even if she brings food from her garden. Rather, she sells at the price of others selling the same goods because she knows “they have to make their dollar”. I never encountered conflict resulting from participation in a *sousou*.

Calling away someone’s customer is frowned upon, again, because it is seen as taking someone else’s dollar. I witnessed a discussion about this one day. An old male vendor quarrelled with a new younger woman and told her to wait until customers came to her stall. The women around me exchanged views about this, concluding that if the woman came “to make ah honest shilling”, she could sell how she wanted. However, the woman realised that she had to learn how to appropriately participate in a powerful marketing ethic. The idea of not calling away somebody’s customer conforms to the view vendors often articulate that “what is for you is for you”. In this context, this means that the dollar that comes to you is yours to make.

Vendors say there is not much conflict among them. This reflects both a reality and an ideal. Many maintain friendly, harmonious relations, especially with their group of neighbours, for many years. Many older women say they don’t like too much quarrelling. Even people who are vex with each other, soon start back talking. Aneela, an Indo-Trinidadian woman who sells with her husband on the third floor described this saying, “It have a helping hand always. If you have problems with someone, nothing don’t keep. Everyone cooperates together. Everybody is hustling, but women and men help each other sell because everyone is willing to see somebody get something when the day come”. Vendors will say race is not an issue on their floor for this reason. Vendors may “joke complain” about each other and talk about who is “miserable” and who “like to give trouble”. There may be much petty fuss and vexation, but serious or physical conflict is rare.
Vendors aim to work and 'live' together. However, where conflict doesn't appear obvious or direct, one can still observe undercurrents in the way women may ignore each other, refuse to sell next to each other, throw words, gossip about each other or give "cut eye". Overall, a sense of vendors' interdependence and the importance of relationship emerge.

This picture is very different from the one presented by Lloyd-Evans and Potter. They quote one Afro-Trinidadian woman saying that women "help each other" and that such relationships work (2002, 189). However, they conclusively state, "higglers have poor networks between themselves...are not willing to assist co-workers in times of trouble as one might expect. Mutual assistance among higglers only seems to be provided in a number of circumstances, mainly at a household level, but rarely in business" (2002, 188). In particular, for females that they interviewed, social networks do not lead to social capital without trust and reciprocity.

In contrast, my observations in this market suggest that business is not simply about being competitive. Vendors attempt to balance making their dollar with not taking away someone else's. This value extends even to their relationship with customers who often get a little extra for free as encouragement to return. This is what Trinidadians call a "langniappe" or when a little extra or more than what is paid for is given. Even the movement of materials, such as cardboard boxes, which are recycled repeatedly around the market for different purposes (to bring in goods, to take home goods, to display goods on the road) highlights the importance of what vendors describe as "how you speak to people". Even if they primarily sell because their other employment choices are limited, women miss the comraderie of the market when they don't come and are, instead, by

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7 They go on to write that, "By contrast, Indo-Trinidadian family businesses tend to operate on a totally different ideology. Families work together for the good of the whole unit, often combining the economic activity of several households in a patriarchal system of control" (2002, 188). Lloyd-Evans and Potter focused more greatly on an Afro-Trinidadian female sample than an Indo-Trinidadian one. They understood Indo-Trinidadian women's roles within the context of the patriarchal family whereas this sample presents a different picture.
themselves at home "with just the TV and the house". Comraderie is also an important aspect of marketing for men. As Merlene, an Indo-Trinidadian vendor selling for thirty years in the market said, "Is like you home for the whole day, everyone live like one family". The sociality of market economics cannot be ignored.

3.3.2 The Significance of Economic Relations to Social Life

As the majority of vendors that I interviewed were women, the responses mainly reflect women's experiences and stories. The majority of market vendors are also women and, to a great extent, the common histories revealed through interviews suggest the experiences of the much larger group in the market. Their most important reason for selling in the market was the need to supplement or provide family income and the importance of sending their children to school.

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After family tradition, "life was tough" is the most common reason older women came to sell in the market. Survival of their family and education of their children was the most important goal. Women did not want to "stay home and cook and
Many instead said "let me try and do something", got some help in the beginning from someone they knew and began selling in the market. It was also very significant that now they did not have to tell their husbands how much they earned nor ask for help from those who did not provide.

More than supporting children and having unsupportive husbands, younger married and unmarried women emphasise the importance of “having my own dollars”, liking to work on their own and feeling they “can't be pushed around”. Even if a few younger women at first felt shame to sell in the market, their mothers often told them they were “making an honest dollar” and encouraged them to run their own business. Other women, like village “tanties” or older women known to the vendors also taught many that I spoke to “how to sell, how to buy, how to arrange goods, how to raise prices, when to drop prices, how to use the scale, how to understand the different prices for different seasons”. Being self-employed, able to support a family and build a house is also important to the men I interviewed and spoke to. A few had lost or given up their jobs or were employed part-time. The majority was employed in the market full time. However, husbands who sell with their wives are more likely to intermittently take on other jobs, e.g. in construction or according to their skill, to bring in two incomes.

Vendors like marketing because “even if you don’t sell out or make back your money, you always have things to eat”. As well, even if turnover is small, “you always have change in your pocket for what you need, you don’t have to wait until the end of the month, you always have something to give to others”. Marketing allows them to save a little and have extra for family, schooling, groceries and a little leisure. They like “being your own boss”, being able to “sit down and get up when I want”, “standing on your own feet”, working three days a week (those who do), meeting customers and having conversations about life and troubles, making money, making decisions, helping out others and keeping themselves occupied.
Usually, vendors like marketing more than they dislike it. As Miss Cleo, one older, Afro-Trinidadian female vendor explained, “I would have my little in my corner and he don’t have to know about that but if he crying you could pull out your money and make some style and give him some. You could buy without asking. You could make grocery, sousou, give him and the children some to hold because they helped in the garden”. Marketing also teaches women to be brave. My teenage friend Jackie affirmed, it teaches “how to deal with life on the outside”.

3.3.3 More than Money Matters: Dollar Sense on the Streets

Vendors cooperate in many ways on the road and share space, scales, small change, plastic bags and boxes. Vendors may also help each other make bags of goods on the road and try to entice customers to buy each other’s goods if they are selling different produce.

However, sorting out selling places on the road is an especially important aspect of vendors’ negotiation with each other. They often compete for places and move
each other’s bags or boxes set to “block” a spot. Most vendors “block” a space by laying a crocus bag or box on the road between and in front of the cars parked on Mucurapo Street. Alternately, they may rest their bag of goods where they want to sell. Most vendors go out before the market has closed to secure a place to sell or their friends will save them a spot if they go before. For this reason, vendors who sell near to each other in the market, often sell near to each other on the road. However, vendors try to make space for each other and will shift around, especially when an elderly woman comes with her goods. It is not a problem to find a little space if a vendor only has a few goods to sell.

Quarrels can still arise if a vendor takes up too much room or is hostile to another who wants to sell next to him or her. However, essentially, “it doh have nothing about holding a spot” and no one can really claim a spot on the road. When vendors move others off their regular and claimed spot, others quarrel saying “you don’t pay rent”, that “nobody can’t claim a spot and those who put down their bag and box just playing boss” or that “the road is for everybody”.

Nonetheless, informal claims to space are part of the experience of roadside selling. If vendors don’t bring out their goods soon after blocking a space and others move their boxes or bags, most people will just find another spot along the road to sell. There would probably be a little grumbling, but most vendors will avoid conflict. All but one of the vendors I interviewed described relations between roadside sellers as “nice”, “okay”, “good”, “very good”, “quiet” and “no problem”. This vendor nonetheless pointed out that small conflicts only last 10-15 minutes. This picture is true for the majority of vendors. However, once or twice I saw fights break out between roadside vendors, usually men who had been drinking alcohol and had then irritated each other.

Somewhat different from selling in the market, selling on the side of the road introduces its own competing value: hustling. This concept is shared with the wharf, but that area is seen as “a win or lose place focusing on every dollar”. In
describing the relation between “everybody have to eat” and “hustling”, the Market Administrator (once Head Clerk at the King’s Wharf Fish Market) compared “some have a conscience” with “some conscience is their dollar”. Hustling is concerned strictly with making money. It emerges in relation to time and space. For example, in the afternoon when vendors are trying to “sell out”, it is more likely that they will call out prices to passing customers, even those looking at another vendors’ goods. Unlike the morning, which is for making back “capital”, the afternoon is for making profit or what vendors call “interest”.

Hustling, as a value, begins to emerge in the afternoon in the market and peaks in the afternoon on the road. It deeply influences how space is negotiated among vendors, and between vendors and police. “Everybody have to eat” is an informal value system which provides a legitimate basis for negotiation with governmental rules. The concept of hustling doesn’t negate this value but, at times, it alters the rules of competition and cooperation and goes one step further in legitimating vendors’ illegal actions. It is possible that the relationship between the “everybody have to eat” and “hustling” highlights value change over time. One or two older Indo-Trinidadian female vendors commented to me that, “Now everyone is running down money and trying to get for themselves”. Older vendors, in particular, feel that they didn’t learn to market like that and don’t want “to move so”.

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Over several afternoons on the road, I asked vendors how they would define hustling. I usually didn’t ask vendors much on the road, but observed and casually chatted with them. I realised, as Lloyd, an Afro-Trinidadian man in his thirties, said, “While people’s money jumping up, is time to sell not talk”. In explaining the meaning of “hustling”, Shasha, one young Indo-Trinidadian, female vendor described how she has to be friendly with customers on the road or else they won’t buy. She also has to call out to them on the road and entice them with prices, by grabbing their attention (“daulin, you want bodi?”) or through jokes (“sour orange and sweet grapefruit to sell!”), “Sweet sucking ting under the skin!” (referring to portugals), “Pepper so hot yuh have to fan!” (using a cardboard box cover to fan), “Slime for your husband to eat!” (referring to ochros).

A “mixed” vendor from the third floor, Reds, agreed that hustling on the road “is like making noise, attracting customers, working hard, taking shit and making joke”. Vendors, and especially male vendors, try to dazzle customers with quick
chatter, “sweet talk”, and prices that fly past them as they hesitate, and then find the vendors have already handed them the goods bagged. Lloyd, who usually sells on the third floor, felt, “Hustling is always toward a goal, it means going through hard times, trying to get back capital”. As Miss Cleo concluded, “Hustling is trying to get the goods out yuh hand”.

An older Indo-Trinidadian ground-floor vendor also linked hustling to road-selling culture itself. Merlene told me, “Hustling does have you real tired cus yuh busy busy busy because police making you move your goods”. An Indo-Trinidadian male, Lance, who sells fruit and corn out of a shopping cart agreed, “Hustling is buying goods, selling it fast at a cheap price or under cost if you have to, is hard work too like when sun hot, police harassing yuh, you have to be on your toes, is a stress to make sure they don’t lock you up”. However, some vendors thrive off the thrill. “Spanish” (Khan, 1993), a male vendor, usually selling on the third floor, described hustling as a “pleasure, excitement, the street have kicksy (funny) characters, you making money fun, hide and seek with police, and if you know what you doing you could make plenty money”.

3.3.4 The Sociality of Consumption

Like a slowly turning kaleidoscope, everybody have to eat changes combination and guise as view filters through morning then afternoon, market stall then roadside spot, and older to younger vendors’ generational practices. It’s a value sensitive to the hum of market life. Clearly, both dollars and people matter, and understanding of one is looped through the other. For women, marketing enables them to have mobility, independence, friendship, economic power and a family. For men, it is also associated with excitement, risk and leisure. Ideals here pivot on labour and need, but also the value or dignity of labour.
These ideals are practiced within spousal and extended family relationships, between neighbours from villages, and among neighbours at the market or on the road. They are even practiced with the police. It is almost as if everybody have to eat is about consuming public space for the benefit of self and family - within the limits set by them. The roadside becomes significant because of aspects of life, such as household income and decision-making, educating children, and saving and spending, that usually considered “private”. Here, however, everybody have to eat encompasses how these define public space, its talk-filled atmosphere and its rules. This helps explains the exchanges, witnessed in the next chapter, between police and vendors.

This first look at how dispositions are lived shows why habitus is such a central concept to this study. Habitus refers to habitually practiced knowledge. Arising from growing up learning the expected ways of life, from the practical expectations implicit in everything from the position of furniture in the house to the ways people greet each other, habitus accounts for the inculcation of lore as a kind of natural expectation of how people will behave with respect to each other and contrasts with the more explicit and institutionalized foundations of law. This is how social politics is interlocked with lore or informal social life.

As I go on to show in the next section, dispositions create an organizing order that can be applied across infinite kinds of tasks and fields (Bourdieu 1977 [1972]: 261). This is what Bourdieu means when he says that they function “as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions” which create a “schemata”. This produces, for example, coherence in consumption practices across music, sport and art, but also coherence between marital or political choices in an individuals’ life. One of the most interesting things about this chapter is that, across the four sites in the study, it shows precisely these analogies.

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8 As Daniel Miller (2006, 7) writes of his research in London, “We had found that we couldn’t start to consider [people’s] relationship to some genre of memory such as their wardrobe, their attitude to sexual relationships, their approach to the use of recipes, or how they dealt with the divorce of their parents, in isolation. Each made sense of the other only in terms of a larger habitus
Habitus creates a social world because those with the same socialization and conditioning share norms and categories of judgment. This is what Bourdieu referred to as the “ontological complicity” and “implicit collusion” generated by shared categories of perception and appreciation (Bourdieu 2000 [1997]: 163). Yet, by embodying habitus, women and men also actively engage with the norms of their world. Habitus, therefore, also creates individuals who devise their own systematic contradictions and a unique approach to life out of widely shared social norms or dispositions. As Bourdieu (ibid, 261) writes, “practice results from “a dialectical relationship between a situation and a habitus”. This is why social politics plays out in such varying ways. Leaving the market, I now head down Mucurapo St. to the Lionel Jagessar and Associates’ mas camp. From here, I add the disposition love for mas to this discussion.

3.4 Love for Mas

Figure 16: Family and Friends in the Mas Camp

As with other social events, love for mas is part of the social world. As I discuss in Chapter 5, these observations underlie Miller’s use of the concept “aesthetic” in relation to “the ideals of order, and balance people use in life, some quite formal, some impressionistic, some calm, some riven by anxiety and denial”.

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Love for mas articulates an emotion fundamental to mas making and relationships in mas camp life. It creates a language for talking about work, family and art, and also blurs social and business values. Love for mas mirrors everybody have to eat in the sense that it expresses ideals that shape and are shaped by relationships to things such as money, practices such as consumption, ideas about what matters, and women and men of all kinds.

Love for mas is about imagining a mas band and its significance, making and selling costumes, reproducing a dispersed group that voluntarily comes together for no other reason than to go public, and managing cooperation, sharing, reciprocity and conflict. It contributes a rationale for the bargaining observed in San Fernando Carnival Committee meetings and described in the next chapter.

As with market vendors, it is about balancing governing and being almost ungovernable. Yet, somewhat differently, while everyone engages with marketing to earn a living, mas making is voluntary work for some. The fact that only the key players really rely on it for a livelihood makes it all the more surprising that mas makers have so much in common at all.

3.4.1 Mixing Love and Business: Negotiating Work, Commitment and Reward

Cooperation has always been important to mas making. Smaller bands are especially associated with shared labour among friends and neighbours (Crowley 1956; Procope 1956, Alleyne-Dettmers 1993, Waite 1993). Husband and wife teams, and their circle of friends, complete the majority of work. Representational bands or those where individual characters are played elicit especial commitment from those “working the mas”. This is true for Indian mas as it carries elements of the spiritual and sacred. Yet, mas camp life shows how even when participation is idealized, coercion, encouragement, competing ideals of nonparticipation,
negotiation for participation on redefined terms, and challenges to leadership are part of the experience.

![Announcing the Band](image_url)

Business and profit, rather than simply idealized notions of nationhood, self-expression and freedom, are significant to mas making. This is particularly true for large (comprising thousands of women and men) mas bands in Port of Spain. Being a "South" band, the Jagessars' have always had to keep the costume prices much lower than in the capital city. If the costumes are unaffordable, then the numbers of those playing in the band would decrease. They try to keep the price of the costume between $400 and $650 which is at least half of the price of a costume in Port of Spain. The smaller numbers of mas players in San Fernando, partly because of the smaller population and the larger numbers of people that go to Port of Spain to play mas, make a difference to the business of mas making in South. This is closer to the experience of other areas outside of the capital.
Unlike in Port of Spain, large bands in San Fernando may rely heavily on unwaged labour and loyalty. Volunteered help is not so much a gift as a desire to participate and contribute, and to work out the terms of reciprocity over time. Friends and family know that the bands need help and their willingness is almost civic as it aims to put the band on the road. It also aims to make the Carnival happen. Yet, mas makers must make a living. Small profits derived from mas bands mean that they must also discourage helpers from asking too much while encouraging them to increasingly work longer and faster as Carnival approaches. Love for mas is the point on which negotiation swivels.

For Lionel, Rose and their children, making mas is both about love and business. Especially, for the members of this family unit, it provides a livelihood. Rose administers the band, Larry manages the mas camp, Lisa researches and prepares information about their portrayals, Lionel creates costume designs and the youngest, Junior, boisterously helps out. Rose is committed to the band because of “love for my culture, mas and my husband” (on a similar point see Mason 1998, 85). She considers herself equally a bandleader and said that she loved the mas even when not profitable. In those times, they were able to rely more on people’s help. In the early days, Lionel had other jobs for extra income. He recollected, “So that is where the love come in. Because we love mas we stay with it, but I leave jobs for Carnival, for my culture since about 1979 or 1980”.

Lionel and Rose explained that mas makers working in the camp are “paid” with costumes or food on the days when they work. Lionel said, “Many times we will ask them what they want, if they want Rose to give them food, if they want pay. They come with their answer for theyself, whatever they desire to have. It’s more than a discount. They get their costume for free but if they want more like a bonnet and trail they have to pay”. This is because large costume pieces like these use a lot of materials, and are very time consuming for even skilled mas makers. Because of band sizes, makers in Port of Spain are more often waged workers in an industry. Similarly, if a band from Port of Spain commissions the Jagessar
camp to make their 'hats' (headpieces), and arm, leg, waist and neck pieces, the family pays everyone who works on that job.

Sometimes, longtime band members have learned skills for which the bandleaders pay them. Yet, Lionel and Rose summarized, "People in this mas camp in San Fernando do it because they love mas and it is a hobby to them. One fella comes in the mas camp because he getting a place to live, another because he is getting rum to drink, another is getting cigarettes and food. And he not leaving until after carnival, he not leaving there. All them boys used to come bring their bags and sleep by Junior. They love mas and the bacchanal that is around a mas camp, one might drop 'fatigue' on another, but working at the same time. Then, meal times Rose cooking, they bathe here, everything. Some come for vices, some come for lodging and some come to learn to make the mas. Others might come around for personal gain or because they think the mas camp is where the action is. Some come for love of it".

Life in the Jagessar camp has changed over time. There is less alcohol drinking and liming. Now, Lionel suggested, camp members have less time because most of the work starts in the months just before Christmas. It is not like Port of Spain where people are working throughout the year. They also get more help in years when band numbers are high. For example, in 1999 when the band was celebrating its twentieth anniversary, one thousand women and men played with them and more than usual came to help. In comparison, around five hundred played mas with the band in 2003. Friends, nephews, nieces, in-laws and original members of the band will come to help, sometimes through day and night. As Lionel explained, "They like Indian mas and like to work Indian mas. I don't think they like other mas as much as Indian mas".

Masqueraders are often loyal to a particular mas or to a bandleader (see also Waite 1993, 196). Loyalty to the mas is especially true for Indian mas as it is a renewed version each year. However, others enter the band because of the price,
to play with their friends or because they like a particular year's costumes. Aching (2002, 81) additionally points out that, “one's association with a particular band is, for the most part, an open public statement about one's allegiances, for example, to a certain neighbourhood, class, sexuality and skin colour range”. He doesn't say this but, as in the market, allegiances to fictive and extended family are also manifest.

Lionel and Rose said that they never really have conflicts with women and men over what they want for work. However, both my observations and discussions suggest that mas camp workers quietly grumble amongst themselves about food, hours, how they are treated and spoken to, and terms on which they participate. The bandleaders say conflicts are small. They might occur with those who only come to hang around and not work, and who take up the place of someone who comes to help or who want food or a costume that they didn't work for. Lionel said he used to “be rough” on people who didn't work hard enough but is less so now. Sometimes people want more than they get or they steal costume materials, particularly if they feel unappreciated.

Despite the relaxed atmosphere of mas camps, a work ethic always prevails (Mason 1998). Peter Mason describes signs around the Peter Minshall camp saying, “no liming” and an atmosphere that also treats Carnival as serious business. The bandleaders felt that the experience should not be different if you are a family or non-family member. Lionel said, “We try not to make anyone feel less than anyone unless we teaching you in a way how to behave”. As Lionel said, “Every job you will have those who work hard and who don't but we try not to discriminate, maybe we will joke with you, give you fatigue or a name to let you know, Dr. Do-Little or something”.

From about September to November, camp members work about three to four hours a day per week. From about November, work hours begin to increase. The fifteen or so men (and women) involved usually begin to leave between eleven
pm and midnight. From January, they work twelve to fourteen hours a day. The camp begins to close between one and three in the morning at this time. In the last two to three weeks, the sons and other males may start sleeping in the camp, and working day and night.

Work hours are particularly long if many people sign up to play with the band or request costumes in a section that is already full. The day or two before Carnival may also be hectic as others come at the last minute to request costumes. Rose does not turn them down because the customer has chosen the band over the others and they hope they will play next year again. Working through night and day usually happens just before competitions as well. Friends, usually men, come in to help make and “pretty up” the King and, especially, Queen costumes. The men will work without sleep and then go home for a day or two before coming back out again.

Love of mas is also important to the Fireworks Promotions camp as friends and family members who “work the mas” with them are unpaid. About ten to fifteen come regularly to work and bandleader Wayne Hanuman says that, as his band comprises four hundred or less members, he doesn’t have to push them to finish a lot of costumes. However, he knows they come out of loyalty or to get a free costume. Like the other bandleaders, he feeds them cooked food on a weekend and sandwiches during the week. He said women are the majority of workers in his camp as many of them are his wife’s friends.

In the Kalicharan’s camp, mostly their sons’ friends come to help. They help because of their connection and loyalty to the family. Wendy Kalicharan thought it was not so much about a love for mas because many of them come to help for the first time. Older women and men come because of loyalty to family too and, secondarily, because of love for mas. Family and friends also come and work voluntarily in this camp, which has successfully produced both winning King and Queen costumes. Wendy will give them sandwiches and sometimes cooked food.
She said that they give regular workers a free costume plus a few hundred dollars on Carnival day. As well, some may accompany the family on trips to different Carnival events around the country. However, as with the Jagessars, family members do the majority of the work. The Kalicharans try to finish their costumes two months before as less people work through Christmas. As Presbyterians, it is also a holy time for them. They also like to fete during Carnival season and try to finish the work so they have some time. For the family, in particular, making mas is underscored by the love of it rather than simply for employment.

Bandleaders may be able to make their living from mas but they have to do other kinds of work as well including weddings and making mas for other countries' Carnivals. Three of four of San Fernando's large bands need other business activities to supplement bandleaders' income. As Lionel acknowledged, "In reality, there is no way that profit can be a bigger impetus than love for mas". His view expresses what I observed in the period that I worked in the camp. Love for mas is strengthened by a love specifically for the materials, appearance and representation of Indian mas.

Past mas makers and Carnival Development Committee members that I interviewed concur. As past member of the committee Vernon Leotaud agreed, "Costume prices are cheaper. Labour is usually unpaid. Profits are smaller. The value of our bands is that they can survive based on free labour, family and friends support for the love of it. A bandleader must love mas to make mas in San Fernando especially". This is also noted by Peter Mason (1998, 81) who describes mas makers' commitment in terms of "love of mas, the team spirit and camaraderie, and as an outlet for their artistic talents".
The notion of the mas man as artist developed over time. Mas man Peter Minshall’s (1985a, 9) view that, “I make mas’. And mas’ is art”, was crucial to this shift. Minshall’s own work appears a “high” art that is modern, globalised, historically-informed and self-conscious. This contrasts to the popular “low” art that mas was considered when it was formed from scraps and emerged from an ideology of nonpossession and peripheralisation (Aching 2002, 83). Mas men like Lionel Jagessar consider themselves artists and this has cultural, national rank. Unlike Minshall, Jagessar doesn’t compare his work to those of great twentieth century European artists, rather his artistry is validated by family, friends, bandmembers and the mas itself. In 1999, the state even awarded him a Hummingbird Silver medal for his contribution to Carnival.

Almost inescapably, Indian mas is representational (see also Bellour and Kinser 1998) As a “traditional” mas that primarily expresses male Native American warriorhood, full costuming, portrayal and individual characters remain important. Noting how traditional mas players enter the spirit of their Carnival characters, Liverpool (2001, 475) suggests that portrayals of warriors and chiefs were attempts by the underprivileged to “gain the status denied them by society”. Reverence for Indian mas may endure in “lower class persons…portrayals…to identify with the struggles of Indians and warriors all over the world” (Liverpool 2001, 362). It may be about “escape from the drudgery of daily life…the fight against tyranny…the spirit of attack…the hopes and aspirations of conquered tribes (Liverpool 2001, 409).

It may also be connected to desires to represent particular masculinities. Partly, Lionel was attracted to Indian mas because he saw it as “a more rugged mas”. As he put it, “Being a youth man and ting, your muscles is something to you at that time, you want to be a chief or warrior or some special guy”. The masculinity associated in Indian mas is also reflected in the costumes. As Lionel described,
The men make the mas look more Indian. It’s hot, but in carnival you could pick up a house, it is the spirit in you”. Interestingly, in comparison to the masjid, men and masculinity are the markers of ‘authenticity’.

A few, mainly older women, will play in full costume like the men and will wear a long decorated skirt and poncho (called a “shawl”), moccasins or moccasin boots, a bonnet (large feathered headpiece), bustle (large feathered backpiece) and facepaint. They may even wear a “herring bone” chest piece and carry a stick decorated with feathers. However, these are only a few, usually older women. In contrast, many older and younger men wear decorated long pants and jacket, bonnets, bustle, face paint, chest pieces and may carry sticks or horns.

For mas makers such as Lionel, who play chief characters, the recognition and sense of accomplishment felt on Carnival days may also inform their identities at other times of the year. Crowley correctly observes that Fancy Indians have
individual names such as One Bull. I found that these titles are mainly taken on by those who are committed Indian mas players, are also mas makers and identify with the spirit of the mas or costume. Those in small bands may all have such titles, but it is a minority of primarily men in a large band such as the Jagessars who take on “warrior” names. Willie, who has his own small authentic Indian mas ‘side’, is called the “Black Elk” and his mas camp is named “House of the Black Elk”. Another player changed his name to “Crazy Horse”.

An Indian mas elder (known to him as “Satan”) named Lionel “Pontiac”, a chief name from the Seminole Nation. Lionel also explained, “Since I do Indian mas, the people around me call me Sitting Bull, I portray that mas several times. They call me that out of the mas camp”. Lionel also warned, however, that a man once told him to be careful taking the name of someone who has lived before. For these mas makers, both Carnival and Indian mas making are spiritually-experienced. For Indian mas bandleaders, leadership is also a spiritual expression. Playing Indian mas creates an affinity with the spirit of mas and the warrior character. For mas makers, in particular, these influence their identities on and off the road.

Lionel always designs the costumes and the band’s section leaders make them in their respective mas camps. When there is conflict over costumes, Lionel asserts his leadership as the bandleader and artist. He expects the section leaders to follow his designs and said, “I am the Chief in my band and people have to hear”. Indian mas bandleaders therefore consider themselves Chiefs in their own rights and leaders of people because of a lineage that has little do with blood, (ethnic) belonging or authenticity. Their leadership is emotional, spiritual, cultural and artistic. The band’s longevity attests to the loyalty and labour they can legitimately command. Many of those in the band have been playing mas with the Jagessars for a decade or more.
3.4.3 The Sociality of Production

Love for mas encircles ideals regarding labour, loyalty and leadership. It expresses desires for self-assertion and a commitment to making culture public. It highlights the limits of freeness, the importance of reciprocity and “how you talk to people”, and, even, wranglings with hierarchy. It is interwoven with family and business priorities and relationships. Here, labour is unwaged, but it is not given for nothing at all. Even if mas makers idealize participation, they may still feel they have to and can remind, “buff” (discipline), cajole and entice to get enough labour volunteered. Complementarily, loyalty of those “working de mas” is often deep and abiding, but also contingent and grudging about disrespect. Leadership is grounded in people, culture, Native American history and ancestors, masculinity, the neighbourhood, family unit and “lime” (open-ended group of friends). As explored further in the next chapter, these meanings powerfully contour mas makers’ approaches to state and nation in Trinidad.

Love for mas adds another dimension to discussion of habitus. Mas makers negotiate very differently with each other and the state than vendors. This is because Carnival comprises and enables specific kinds of power or “capital”. In this sense, it is its own “field”. Fields comprise different women and men’s positions, different kinds of power and the relations among them all9. They are the sites of struggle, and people’s strategies are shaped by their position in and perceptions of the field (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 101). Female and male mas makers’ practices, therefore, “are constituted by and constitute their

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9 An oft cited definition describes a field as “a structured space of positions in which the positions and their interrelations are determined by the distribution of different kinds of resources or “capital”” (Thompson 1991: 14). Jenkins (1992, 85) writes, “A field is a structured system of social positions – occupied either by individuals or institutions – the nature of which defines the situation for their occupants. It is also a system of forces which exist between these positions; a field is structured internally in terms of power relations. Positions stand in relationships of domination, subordination or equivalence (homology) to each other by virtue of the access they afford to the goods or resources (capital) which are at stake in the field. ... The nature of positions, their ‘objective definition’, is to be found in their relationship to the relevant form of capital”.

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dispositions (habitus), the capital they possess and the fields within which they operate” (Stokkes 2002, 5).

Drawing on Beyond a Boundary (James 1983 [1963]) for another example, cricket is a ‘field’ (as also literally!) with its own specific struggles shaped by a distinctive form of capital, “ownership of which is recognized to bestow symbolic authority within that field” (Smith 2006, 99). In this context, success or failure is not universal, natural nor determined by “seemingly autonomous struggles”, but result from “unrecognized homologies between that field and the wider forces of social power” (ibid, 99).

In other words, the power of cricketing ‘genius’ has to be understood in terms of its own rules as well as the larger historical and colonial context. Those who accept and participate in a particular field validate the truth of those who dominate. Others may challenge those claims of power by asserting that they are relative. For example, women can question whether cricket is an accurate metaphor for postcolonial engagement given their exclusion and the invalidity of generalizing men’s experience and masculinities as representative of us all.

In San Fernando, market, mas camp, masjid and Railway Line work as their own fields. They are each autonomously constituted by their own participants, expected roles and habitual relations, power struggles, kinds of capital, dispositions and meanings, and creative ways of negotiating survival, selfhood and belonging. Each site is not only physical, but realizes habitus as practice. The women and men who make up these catchments also access generalized forms of capital because of their ethnicity, income or gender. All these affect their ability to determine the terms of their engagement in the world or their aesthetic authority. Together, the women and men in these sites show a politics of authority that manifests in various and corresponding ways across domains of practice. In this light, the next site shows yet another incarnation of such politics in daily life.
3.5 Contacts

Contacts are more than just people one knows or relationships. They are women and men who can advise and help because they have status within or access to particular networks. This is what some call “political capital” and some call “social capital”. This haziness alone squarely points to its ambiguity, and styles of action. Contacts are cultivated, closely protected, highly valued and, often, considered very necessary for securing even the most basic services and meeting needs.

This is because the networks they can tap into are often bounded or hierarchical. Contacts matter, especially if you are on the periphery of institutions and elites. Like “everybody have to eat”, “contacts” expresses values of reciprocity and relationship. Yet, in stark contrast, it highlights an acceptance that not everyone will get nor get equally. In other words, who hustles really eats. Residents on the Railway Line survive through hustling, sharing and depending on others for help. This is a combination of connections and contacts. Even when they idealize
mutual cooperation, many different factors create obstacles that are only sometimes overcome, and then only by some.

### 3.5.1 Connections: *When Who You Know Means What You Have*

Whereas the wharf is especially characterized by 'hustling', Railway Line residents spend a great deal of energy tempering this with values of sharing and cooperation. Their connections with each other are essential here. Both female and male residents on the Wharf and Railway Line see the two areas as different and somewhat separate social space. The Wharf is seen as a place open to the public, for fishermen and for selling fish, hustling and being "busy busy" making a livelihood.

In contrast, the Railway Line is seen as “semi residential”, “more homely”, “a little more elevated” and more like a “family-oriented” area. On the Line, families bathe in the sea on a weekend, children are in school during the week, and there is “no noise or fighting or drugs” and “nobody cussing nobody or tiefing from nobody” as occurs on the Wharf. Wharf activities, including “hustling fish and drugs” and selling sex are not as accepted on the Line. In particular, men see themselves as responsible for keeping drug selling or stealing out of the Line.

There are no formal community-based organizations, social clubs, women’s groups or religious centres which a majority of neighbourhood members attend. Yet, even without formal organization, women and men have created a neighbourhood rich in family life. Line residents say that men who come to the area for illegal activities, from Marabella or Springvale, cause the reputation or "stain" of King’s Wharf.
A number of women told me that it makes it harder to get a job if the employer knows you are from the Wharf. They often emphasised that if people come to the place to know it from being around it, they will see that it “ent [is not] that bad” and that “here is a part of the world”.

Those who live on the Railway Line consider it their own legitimate part of the world. Social networks, which aid sharing, are very important to residents’ lives and relationships exist with immediate neighbours who see each other each day. For the most part, relations among residents are cordial. Among CEPEP and URP workers, six report “okay” relations, four “good” relations and three “very good” relations. Only one (mixed) male CEPEP worker said that relations were “not good”. He was very critical of community gossip and people not wanting “to see others improve”. One person gave no response.

Residents say there is cooperation, but will also complain that it is not enough. Both women and men borrow carts to carry buckets to fill water, borrow money, share fruit, cigarettes, marijuana, rolling paper, drinks, roasted fish and advice. There are two extended family groups, one Indo-Trinidadian/Dougla and one
Afro-Trinidadian, who live on the Wharf and Line. Usually, extended female family members will share food with each other and, only sometimes, with others.

Some neighbours may help if another is sick, especially an elder resident. Generally, the neighbourhood comes together for deaths or events in the area. Often, women and men will look out for each other’s children. They also cooperate for events such as family day or St. Peter’s Day when everyone contributes food or labour. On Carnival Sunday as well, they “have a lil lime going down to Jouvay”. As Josanne, one young woman working for CEPEP, explained, “we have to cooperate because everyone has to share together, when it have functions we cooperate with that. When we have a reason to cooperate, we cooperate”.

However, Mr. Ross, a male, Afro-Trinidadian resident working with CEPEP, complained that “we meet, talk, laugh, make jokes, but we are not really a community getting together to discuss things. I try once or twice and everyone says “yes yes” but then only two show up. We don’t have a sense of permanence”. Another, Bolo, complained that, “nobody looks out for you here”. URP workers tell the same stories. Lana told me about sharing clothes with other residents from a barrel her family sent from New York. The women working in URP also mentioned sharing advice about childrearing, “cooking”, “little household things” and what they could do to better the area. Women have gone to their representatives in small groups to ask for pipe-borne water and electricity. Residents’ friendships may also change as friends quarrel and stop speaking or start talking more to others.

Besides the quiet, peace, fruit trees, sea breeze and view of the sea, residents like having plenty “partners” to roast a fish or cook with, mingle and talk. Nonetheless, they do not like many aspects of life on the Line. These include how men from other areas, but mostly Springvale, hide drugs on the Line to sell on the Wharf. Women especially believe that this puts them all at risk and makes the
police “harass everyone”. A number of residents talked about how “cocaine spoil here” by bringing more violence, theft and drug dealing. Marijuana selling and smoking is hardly considered an issue. Life has also become more difficult as there are fewer boats now, fishing is not as lucrative and the “hustling is stiffer”. Also, at times, some residents feel there is not enough togetherness and cooperation and “if something is wrong with you, people act like they don’t care”.

Others complain that “people who feel they always here, always tell you ‘you now from here’ if you want to change things”. Some like that the shaded inner part of the Line feels “like country” but others complained of its “backward, dilapidated” look with “mash up” roads and “too much bush”. Yet, Baby Girl, an Indo-Trinidadian URP worker in her fifties, lamented that if they try to improve, for example by starting a kitchen garden, “whatever you plant somebody tief”.

On the one hand, lack of electricity, pipe-borne water and a properly paved road are the most major concerns, but people’s attitude to each other and gossip (“macoing”) are the aspects of life on the Line that women and men complain about second most. This vividly illuminates the importance of relationship. Even if there are a lack of amenities and police harassment to overcome, what female and male residents often wish for is simply more cooperation and reciprocity. These mitigate against so many difficult aspects of living on the line.

In fact, connections drew many of them to the Railway Line in the first place. Of the CEPEP interviewees, one came because he had family already living on the Line, another because he was given a piece of land on the Line and was able to move from Springvale to a small house he built for his family. A third had family who used to “hustle fish” so he began to live on the Wharf when he left his Springvale home because he was “sure to make a dollar selling fish and going in the sea”. A fourth man was brought here as a teenager by a friends’ father for them both to learn “fishining” [to fish]. Though he is now building his house
outside the community, he lived here for a number of years and sees it as a "blessed place" that feeds plenty. Women working for URP had similar stories.

Women and men stay because they have become comfortable, feel safe, like the place, have family around, or because it is close to work and school, and is affordable. The majority of residents I interviewed have also not had the opportunities or choice to move as they didn’t have land or money to build, rent or to move further away. In other words, in addition to valuing the Line’s social networks, they have “nowhere else to go”.

The eight CEPEP workers are equally divided between wanting to stay and not stay on the Line or Wharf. Similarly, half plan to stay and half do not. Of the seven URP workers, four want to stay and three do not. Of this group of mainly women, four do not plan to stay. This group also cites a lack of electricity, pipe-borne water and land tenure as reason to plan to leave.

Besides part time work, connections and hustling, residents on the Line are helped by limited remittances (mainly from the US), donations of money, food and clothes from religious groups, friends and contractors “sponsoring” (paying for) leisure activities, winnings from gambling in lotteries like Play Whe, public assistance allowances, other family members’ (usually temporary) income or welfare allowances, and credit from groceries, drug stores and other such businesses.

However, there is not always enough money to afford eating well. Families tend to eat more carbohydrates such as rice and flour and less expensive local vegetables such as bodi and pumpkin. They pick fruit from the trees on the road, and one woman grows plants such as paw paw and bodi. Usually, residents cannot afford to eat meat everyday, but can more cheaply buy or hustle (beg for) a fish to cook.
As residents-turned-workers, those living on the Line take their approach to connections with them to their job sites. Worker relations, therefore, tend to be harmonious. Workers will share food, juice, cigarettes, snacks and opinions. Infrequently, they will “make a cook” together to eat when they have finished their “portion” of work for the day. Two workers (and not necessarily the women) are likely to cook, for example, crab and dumpling, duck, chicken, iguana or “broth” while the others finish all the work. Then, they eat together.

In some groups, there is more “commess (confusion) like Young and Restless” or gossip, throwing words, cussing or ‘cut eye’ during work. Some women and men complain how others “carry news” to the boss about other workers and their behaviour on the job site. Other groups may not have these kinds of relations at all. Most workers like those they work with and some will “lime” together by going drinking in a bar after they get a fortnight’s pay. Workers do fall out with each other, but it usually passes soon and relations are restored within the workday. If they are caught cussing or quarreling on the job, workers can be sent home without pay for a few days or as much as two weeks.
Similarly, URP workers say they like the relatively easy work, and the chance to meet other people and talk with each other. Lana described, “they don’t push you around and don’t kill you with work because the money is small”. Candice said, “you can leave early if you not feeling good or have your name down even if you don’t go”. This again points to the crucial role of friendship, fairness and reciprocity. Four others mentioned how much they enjoy the social interaction. Miss Mavis felt it “makes the working environment comfortable, we work more in unity”.

Workers complain, however, of “bad talk” and gossip, some workers’ laziness and the “pressure” of work in the sun or rain cutting grass. They don’t mention conflicts as an issue that makes them dislike work. Of course, they would like an improved salary. Still, this female-dominated group brings to their work the same personal approach that emphasizes family, friendship, familiarity and “how you speak to people”.

3.5.3 How You Speak to People: The Voice of Votes

Whereas connections are more egalitarian, workers’ contacts empower them to maneuver hierarchy and unequal status. Here, their vote is also a nuanced language listened for, reflected upon and responded to by those higher up. Votes both enable and affirm contacts.

A number of those who live on the Line vote in Springvale, and as the Local Government Councillor for the area acknowledged, their votes are significant. Votes and party loyalty are strategically deployed and determined by job opportunities and other benefits – or who can give the most. However, it is noteworthy that, voters will say they are voting for one party and actually vote for another or campaign for one and vote for another. This occurs as they seek to maximise their chances of getting jobs they may desperately need. As an
opposition politician pointed out, “Usually people will take you, drink you, eat you and vote you out. Like with CEPEP, it have some who will take the job and still vote for us”.

Six of eight CEPEP workers felt that belonging to a party was not necessary for their job. This group argued that “UNC people” were working with them. The minority two people who said party belonging was necessary felt that “a CEPEP contract is a politician something. They have to be sure you are a PNM”. These two workers also more often described the job as an exchange for votes. Four of seven URP workers felt that party belonging was not necessary. However, Aunt Leela, an Indo-Trinidadian in her fifties, added, “but you sense that if you support the party, they help you get work”.

The smaller group of three workers who felt that party belonging was necessary made statements like, “belong or vote for them. Your have to be in a party to get work or lie and say you in de party” and “yes you have to be seen as if you belong”. Baby Girl said, “we went and helped them [UNC] campaign and that helped me and my husband get regular 10 days”. While there is an overall perception that party belonging is not necessary to accessing URP or CEPEP work, there is a competing view that it could help. As earlier discussions show, even if you are not seen as a party member, having a contact within the party is often crucial.

In fact, six of eight CEPEP workers agreed that it does help if you are a known supporter. Only one said no. There was one no answer. Leroy, an Afro-Trinidadian man in this group, said, “yes, exactly because I don’t think they want any UNC in the people place”. Mr. Ross, Miss Merle’s husband, felt it helped that “people know personally I am a PNM” and continued, “the boss just wanted workers, but he knows I am a PNM. Since I born growing up I belong to one party but you see where work concern, I don’t put politics in that. I don’t even argue politics”.

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There is open acknowledgement of the usefulness of being political to getting a job at the same time as there is a sense that it can also negatively affect one's working life. Five of seven URP workers agreed with the majority from CEPEP. Two of these women disagreed that it helps you get a job if you are a known supporter. Lana felt it does help because “the UNC guy kept asking me to vote for de party because he got me this job and I say yes I would vote for them, but I didn’t”. Clearly, workers perceive that both the PNM and UNC use state resources as a reward for their supporters and as a tool for the party.

Does it matter which party workers support? Are they only interested in supporting the party in power? Will they vote for any party? Four CEPEP workers said ‘yes’ and four said ‘no’. Mr. Ross responded, “I always believe that to me when it come to survival, when you thinking family-wise, once the work paying, yes is work and is legal money under the government, that is no problem...but still vote PNM”. Josanne replied, “why not, I would act like I switch. Is money we talking about, if everyone doing it, you have to learn to play the game or get left in the dark like a jackass, whoever giving work I with them. I putting on the rising sun jersey10. Hypocrite all of us but you have to live”. Baby Girl said “no, because work shouldn’t be in politics, especially this work for the community should carry on despite the party”. Lana responded, “no, I would get a party card, but I wouldn’t vote UNC”.

Among URP workers, three said they would switch and four said they would not. Two of those four said, “because I belong to one party” and “I wouldn’t switch but I might say so”. These interesting responses show how female and male workers play the party system itself as they seek livelihood options, but also exercise loyalty to one party. For the majority, getting a job is not worth switching parties. This is a strong emphasis on loyalty. However, their willingness to play ‘like yuh switch’ points to the far more compelling necessity of negotiating patronage, livelihood needs and party politics together.

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10 The party symbol of the United National Congress (UNC).
All the workers I interviewed voted before. Among CEPEP workers, except two persons who voted for the UNC in 1995, they all vote PNM. There are three main reasons for this. Workers will vote for the PNM because of their family background ("from my mother, growing up in a home that was PNM", "based on how brought up", "from growing from small, I know PNM, so I continue with my family tradition", "I is a PNM, it comes from grandmother, grandfather and mother"). One said, since I know myself that is the only party I belong to.

Their vote is also influenced by the impression the two parties make ("depending on how I see government handle things, what they do in power to benefit poorer class of people in life", "I like Manning, he looks like he is a straightforward type. I don’t like the grey hair one, he too underneath, he tiefing all the people money and pretending he don’t know where it gone. It remind me of my [CEPEP] boss"). Finally, securing a job is a key basis for support ("I voted UNC because I used to get regular ‘10 days’ work with them, then when PNM took over, I had to be a PNM to get a ‘10 days’ too").

When these CEPEP workers voted, they were hoping their vote would help them get lights, road improvements, security, police patrols and "betterment" once their party won power. Generally, they have been disappointed. As Josanne said, "politics is about people coming around and telling people you would get everything and then you doesn’t". They didn’t get the road fixed or lights and two said, "I still paying $25 for pitchoil and I done blacken my hand for you. Next time I not voting, PNM and UNC is a waste of time, not doing nothing for nobody". However, others who got help with groceries felt their needs had been somewhat met. One male said they had no expectations when they voted for the PNM in the last election. Two persons didn’t answer.

The picture among URP workers is very similar. All voted before, and except in two cases, when in 1986 one voted NAR and in 1995 one Indo-Trinidadian and one Afro-Trinidadian voted UNC, all vote PNM. Generally, their reasons for
voting the way they do included considerations such as “according to how they talk to you, where you working, what they promise, how much they fool you around, if they make you go in the office like dog to beg for a work”.

Miss Beryl, this time an Afro-Trinidadian, said, “I look at how if there is any progress, betterment in life with the people in the country, see if it is hard for people to get jobs, but I doesn’t really support a party because I don’t find one better than the other”. Miss Mavis agreed that it is “plenty decision because sometimes you want something, one party or de other offer it”. But two workers were less ambivalent and made statements like, “you put your stamp back there again, you not changing that” and “I is PNM regardless”. Lana said “my family always vote PNM so I just go with the flow”.

Interestingly, about three said they planned not to vote next time because “each promising but after you vote you not seeing their face or anything”. Four women in the group said they voted because they had expectations that they would get amenities, a repaved road and jobs. Two workers said they had no expectations. One added that “the Member of Parliament promised lights but we didn’t get anything, still I always PNM even with unfulfilled promises, even if they don’t deserve it”. This suggests that people support those with power in the state hierarchy, or the chance to get that power, not because they are necessarily fooled but as strategic hopes, choices and loyalties.

Male and female workers connect with the party system both through voting, jobs and through help given by various political actors and institutions. For example, five of eight CEPEP workers said that workers go to the Constituency Office for help with things like better jobs, food giveaways, groceries, help with problems or for a ‘10 days’ (“if you know people, they will take out somebody to help you get a ‘10 days’”), to complain about their boss, and ask for electricity, water and favours like a pipe in front of their yard.
Mr. Ross complained, “but I knows nobody, who I will go to? Usually is those who know people in de office. If we had bigshot people here, lights here already but, as it is low class of people, we don’t get same treatment”. Those who said ‘no’ or ‘don’t know’ never went themselves or said they didn’t know about others. All seven URP workers also said that workers go for help to the Constituency Office. This is particularly true for female workers. Their list of needs was similar to those in CEPEP.

The majority felt that the office did help with things like groceries. However, Baby Girl complained that the office never helped them with a job and it made no sense to go. These responses mesh in interesting ways with the next chapter’s description of how women and men actually got their jobs and negotiated their needs.

3.5.4 Consuming Sociality

Figure 22: The Comfort of Family
Having contacts is about forming and managing reciprocal relationships. It is a hustle. Governments are expected to help women and men or be voted out of power. An astute government doesn’t have to help everyone, but has to be able to count on the loyalty of enough voters to be returned to office. There is a risk when both parties promise similar benefits that voters will turn to whoever offers more. Or, there is the chance that if not enough money is spent or not enough people helped, that they will not come out for the party when it counts.

In contrast to the market ethic “everybody have to eat”, contacts appears to operate in a winner-take-all context best described as “who hustles eats”. In other words, parties that deliver patronage will win the state because voters who benefit return their loyalty. As the Trinidadian proverb aptly summarises, who have more corn feed more fowl.

The goal is to be known to those in the political party as a supporter and to derive opportunities from the relationship whenever needed. These relationships enable informal access to formal structures and to opportunities. At the same time, political parties are aware that women and men may take what they offer and still vote for an opposing party. As the current PNM MP put it, “These are people thinking day-to-day, at the most dependent level of society and living at subsistence level or lower. If your opponent comes and offers more, it is a human approach to vote for whoever who gives you more”.

There is also the double-speak of those in politicians who on the one hand argue that “spending money wins elections” but, also assert that “money and even patronage don’t really win elections when you are able to communicate your message properly”. Still, they spend and are “eaten out” by potential voters who may still deny them state resources they need to control and consume. Inevitably, not everyone will eat in this spiraling give-and-take.
Contacts underscores distribution of state resources through informal networks. It is also a source for joyful moments for most workers living on the Railway Line. Not only can contacts result in homes, jobs and benefits, but it also provokes feelings of success in being given a hug by an MP, recognized from a crowd or called by name. This ushers in feelings of respectability, and feels good. Similarly, Bourdieu’s focus on practice points to the significance of the body, emotions and actions, not just what women or men consciously do or say about what they do.

However, these ethnographic pictures also suggest that women and men do not habitually live out their everyday practices without consciousness or “thinking abstractly about their culture” (Navaro-Yashin 2002, 207). Instead, as Yael Navaro-Yashin suggests, there are “different and simultaneous kinds of consciousness: crisply articulate, hazy, or submerged”, “out of focus”, “hazy” “flowing” and “fleeting”, “spontaneous” and “enforced” (ibid, 16). In other words, individuals are not activated by patterns of social life that are 'out there'. They actively pull on culturally-shaped meanings, to conceptualize space and transgress or adhere to norms, in everyday physical and emotional encounters.

This virtuosity, shaping when and how to interrelate, mobilizes key dispositions unself/consciously even while articulating a clear, reflective public commentary about what can and can’t be taken for granted (Farnell 2000, 408). These images reinforce the usefulness of starting analysis with women and men’s actions rather than just their identities (Valverde 1998, 217). As the next section shows, women and men’s needs, relationships, feelings and tactics mediate the forms of power and meaning associated with ethnic, religious and gender identities.

11 In Bourdieu’s words, “The conditions associated with a particular class of conditions of existence produce habitus, systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them. Objectively ‘regulated’ and ‘regular’ without being in any way the product of obedience to rules, they can be collectively orchestrated without being the product of the organizing action of a conductor” (1990 [1980], 53).
3.6 Return to Spirituality

Return to spirituality is an ideal often deferred to by members of the San Fernando Jama Masjid. It expresses a desire to ground practices and relationships in norms of goodness, rights and justice. It offers a sense of safe enclosure against the glare, impurities, dangers and confusion of everyday public interactions. During the weeks leading up to the ASJA’s election and in its aftermath, involved masjid members often affirmed its significance for business practices, leadership and gender roles. For them, it signified the past, elders, tradition and religious law, and it established honour, authenticity and community.

Like the other values explored above, it highlights how much relationship and cooperation are cherished. This may include relationship to God, to other women and men, to family, to leaders and to associational life itself. The values
emerging from the market, mas camp and Railway Line illuminate different approaches to correct livelihood practices, and the latter two especially point to bases for widely accepted leadership. “Return to spirituality” is not far different.

3.6.1 When Money Talks: Livelihood, Business and Correct Practice

Livelihood concerns include sanctions against selling alcohol or charging interest (riba) and using non-Islamic banks. Charges related to these were leveled against specific leaders throughout campaigning and at the election, and they typically provide gossip material in the community. Livelihood codes, however, are really targeted at the dangers of money to create deception, lessen faith, enable exploitation and legitimize business- rather than spiritually-oriented leadership. Money can create a lust for power rather than acceptance that, as market vendors say, “what is for you is for you”. Livelihood and even business-style leadership are important, but “return to spirituality” marks their limits.

One effect is an internal critique of the kind of “contacts” system witnessed on the Wharf and experienced in many other areas and aspects of life. The San Fernando Masjid-led team bitterly lamented the power of patronage to ensure support of those on the ground. As one put it, “Money convinces people even if they support you all the years...money talks”. The two women involved in election organizing also talked about the importance of having access to funds “for everything...canvassing, food, jerseys, etc”. Shazeeda felt their ‘side’ had less money for printing, travel and other costs whereas their competition had far more to make promises, sponsor dinners, travel the country and meet Imams.

Before getting involved in the election, Taimoon didn’t realize such struggle for power and prestige is created by control of mosques, schools and, therefore, communities. According to Tiab Rahman, one of the masjid’s oldest members, ballot-fixing, mis-counting and patronage began with the development of schools in the 1940s. Staffing began to not only reflect Islamic purposes but also a
struggle for positions, and the Executive’s ability to bestow it. The Education Board had begun to be an important site for the assertion of power within the ASJA. Presently, government support for schools, various fees, and donations to mosque and schools are basically the association’s source of livelihood and provide authority and funds for those controlling the ASJA.

A past Secretary for the Education Board defined patronage as the ability to “get people’s children in school, give contracts to do work and make promises to help mosques”. He explained that these promises are “fulfilled by [excess] money from the Education Board” and felt it helped win the election. Shazeeda defined patronage as “funds, houses, transportation, contributions to a party, getting people to work for you, getting people to support who you support”.

Taimoon agreed that patronage keeps people obligated for later at the polls. She said she didn’t see accepting it as corrupt, but giving it to use for power as corrupt. She compared patronage in the ASJA to having to have a party card to “get a CEPEP work” in her area of Tabaquite, and having to deal with an administration that is biased toward one party’s supporters who, therefore, more greatly benefit. She concluded that patronage is about people asking, “What can I get from the controlling body? Give me my reason for supporting you?” In other words, “it is an attractive package that determines who governs us”.

Regardless of what actually occurred in the election, it emphasised how popular discourses about need, leadership, patronage and spirituality can be knotted together. Masjid leaders’ complained that “the other side” only won the election because Imams did not know that the increased benefits and stipends they got were due to them as long as ASJA had the funds. They did not require the sense of obligation that became so significant in the election. Taimoon concluded, “Upkeep of mosques and help to Imams is not a favour but a help ASJA is supposed to provide, but people felt they would be victimized and lose these benefits and so couldn’t act independently”.

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The team sought to politicize how money corrupts when used to create obligation and consolidate personal power. One great loss to the campaign was its inability to counter the friendship network that existed among some *jamaat* [community]-level Mosque Boards, Imams and the association’s administrative leadership. These personal networks provided the context within which women and men made their decisions during the election.

Yet, the election highlighted that even values of goodness and justice must cohere with women and men’s material needs. Taimoon was quite critical of the campaign slogan *Return to Spirituality* and felt “it was not called for as the whole organization and all its members were already dedicated to spirituality”. The *Masjid* President blamed some of their loss on “too much talk of spirituality and not enough about a new roof or increased stipends. We didn’t have a manifesto that spoke to people on both the ground *and* at a spiritual level. We couldn’t rely on moral authority”. He also blamed a lack of support and said, “Ground troops were not reliable and we didn’t have enough footsoldiers. We didn’t get the support from people who promised to be financial backers”.

3.6.2 **Leadership in Relation to God, Constitution and People**

![Figure 24: Seeking Knowledge](image-url)
At one campaign meeting, one Imam present suggested that the team print T-shirts for their supporters. They were to say on the front, “When choosing a leader…” and on the back “Choose a return to spirituality!” In this way, the keenly contested issue of leadership was apparently resolved. Similarly, ASJA women and men list many leadership qualities they value, but the essential ingredient is spiritual “correctness”. This eclipsed and formed the context within which other qualities such as being a good Muslim, being educated in Islam, having communication skills, the intention to do activities uplifting to the general membership, agreement and good relations with everyone, and being supported with cooperation from others, are judged. There is general consensus that any leader should be god-fearing, lead according to the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad and be chosen on the basis of character rather than wealth. Yet, below the surface, there is much ambivalence about what is spiritually correct and who can lead.

Debates revolve around a hierarchical order of leaders and their authority. Who has final say? Is it the Spiritual Leader, known as the Sheik ul Islam, or Administrative Leader, formally titled the President General? What would God want? What does the constitution say? How do Muslims feel about it? This is precisely what the election sought to solve.

In the bacchanal, one ‘side’ accused the Spiritual Head of “being out of touch” and in “an ivory tower” while the other ‘side’ accused the Administrative Head of being a dictator. Each was an attack on the other’s height in the order. Some women, such as Muniba, argue that none is higher than the other. Others saw the Spiritual Head as the higher authority, but felt the division of power should not cause conflict. The President of the YWMA attributed the tense undercurrents in the election to “ignorance about leadership, community, honour, respect and Islam”. Others simply saw it as a battle of personalities.
Certainly, my observations suggested that the President General felt that his own post of Administrative Head held ultimate decision-making power over disbursement of funds, future plans, constitutional change, election protocols and associational life generally. Not surprisingly, the Spiritual Head was critical of the idea of non-spiritual leadership, and the division between church and state that exists in the society and influences even the ASJA community. Believing leadership and spiritually-correct leadership to be the same thing, he felt the most important qualities of a leader are piety, capability and a good understanding of Islam. He did not see the constitution creating a division of power between two equal Heads. To him, the administrative leader is a functionary. However, he recognized that since the administrative leader acts as the chief representative of Muslims in Trinidad and Tobago, and is given resources, he is able to act as the Head of the organization. The Sheik ul Islam becomes, then, a figurehead which the Spiritual Head compared to “the President of Trinidad and Tobago”.

While it certainly seems as if God would make the Spiritual Head have highest authority, the ASJA constitution presented a different picture. Incorporated into the ASJA is the idea of having a Spiritual Head who interprets correct practice on the basis of the Sharia (divine law as practiced by the Prophet Mohammed), and who is a spiritual authority. Over the history of the ASJA, there have been periods when different individuals have filled these two positions and when the President General has acted as both Administrative Head and de facto Spiritual Head. This occurred either when no Sheik was appointed or when the Sheik did not reside in Trinidad and Tobago.

As power is divided in the ASJA constitution, spiritual leaders are employed by the Executive Council. The President General therefore becomes the de facto final authority. The control of organizational funds and the administrative structure have, since inception, given the President General and Executive Council decision-making power never held by the Sheik ul Islam. The Council can even prevent a Sheik from exercising functions of the office that are outlined in the
constitution. Here, personality and the personal wielding of power become significant. As the Spiritual Head felt, control of funds garnered support through disbursements to *jamaats* for their mosques and stipends to Imams. Administrative leadership, therefore, did not have to appeal to the community on an Islamic basis.

Essentially, the *masjid*’s rebellious campaign heavily relied on affirming the concept of a Spiritual Head as the highest authority. According to Shazeeda, “We ran a clean campaign and never spoke about the President General. We just asked people about what is going on, what they want and what they saw as the role of the Spiritual Head”. Regarding his own views, a politician involved explained,

> Based on my own belief and my own recognition of the importance of spirituality to me and everyone else, the spiritual leader is the fountain, the head of the organisation and whatever administrative mechanisms he chooses to implement or policies and directives for the organisation, he should be in command, conflict should not arise. So if the Spiritual Leader thinks education is on the front burner and his goal is to reach other communities, he could designate the Administrative Head or organisation to proceed. I do not see that as separate from the guidance of the Spiritual Head.

The *masjid* ‘side’ advocated for spiritual leadership and concomitant change to the governance structure, and increased money for Imams. The campaign slogan, “Return to Spirituality”, was intended to emphasize that community spirituality itself was at stake.

Shazeeda felt the team over-emphasised following a leader in comparison to emphasizing particular Islamic laws and practices based on the *Sharia*, which seemed to really be what the men involved wanted. Similarly, Taimoon wanted to emphasise the importance of the best people being selected and she wanted to talk with women and men about what to expect of people at the Executive level. The
campaign sought to reawaken the idea of personal leadership based on spirituality rather than money, patronage, constitutional power and votes.

Yet, they lost on all counts. Ironically, this could be because their pivotal slogan had far wider meanings than they anticipated. Its perfect resonance articulated more than they bargained. Rather than simply being about leadership, it also spoke to concerns about Imam's livelihoods, maasajids' needs for fans or a PA system, members' admiration for efficient and helpful administration, antipathy about dividing the association through 'confusion' rather than cooperation, family networks, willingness to negotiate reciprocity and the power of personal ties. The surprise was that social and economic connections were also voters' return paths to spirituality. This illuminates the nuanced analogies between return to spirituality and everybody have to eat.

3.6.3 Inclusion, Accountability and Fairness

While for male campaigners, return to spirituality was clearly about the right to question and participate, administrative accountability and brotherly fairness, it was also about reaffirming Islamic masculinity. Gender remained at the heart of spiritually-correct leadership. Although women never collectively nor vocally critiqued this position, their views were a subterranean flow beneath the drama of the election. In their own ways, many women claimed the basic value of the campaign.

Religious leaders and male campaigners' priorities reproduced fundamental conceptions of gender complementarity. Women and men have separate roles, but each has an important place in the community. One Maulana argued that, "women might be disenfranchised in this system but there are no clear cut rules on women's participation" in state or community elections and governance. As the state is interpreted to be kufr or corrupt, women's (and even men's) limited
participation is more widely accepted. Within wider society, women would have to interact with non-Muslims and men. This view holds weight despite many women’s interactions with non-Muslims and men in the grocery or at work, getting gas for their car or in conversation with neighbours.

Within the ASJA and Islam, as the Spiritual Head explained, women’s suffrage is considered to be new and the organization has remained traditional and “not yet taken the leap”. The issue is presented as one of “Sharia law versus secular law”. As the Sheik ul Islam continued, “You could use a secular method to set up structures for governing a religious organization, but this is the wrong approach because the Surah should determine everything”. Yet, there was no clear consensus among men about women’s participation in voting or governance.

Haji Ralph Khan, also a long-standing member of the ASJA in his seventies and past Executive Council member, thought that women should not have been told not to go observe election because “Islam is about equal rights”. He felt women should be able to run for election and vote. As he concluded, “There are women with good Islamic training, who do a lot of work for the organization and have good qualities. But it is up to the women to fight for that right. Because if you follow custom and tradition, where are you going?” Nonetheless, the majority concurred with a Past Present General who felt that suggested that “women have never been part of the ASJA decision-making, but we need their input and their help, and we need to consult them”.

Among both men and women, some chose to interpret revitalized spirituality as both maintenance of and challenge to tradition. There was no consensus among women. Some argued that an expanded role for women more greatly reflected the original practice of the Prophet and women’s equality in early Islam. Others pointed out that not all male leaders conduct themselves correctly. This leaves room for assertions that women’s participation in leadership roles can encourage greater morality.
This argument relies on the idea that females embody moral codes. It seeks participation for the sake of religion, family and community, not on the basis of equality. Despite the custom that women don’t attend community elections, Ruqaya decided to go to observe. Responding to the argument that women should not attend the election because of the “rough and tumble nature of politics”, “hooliganism” and “men’s behaviour at elections”, she insisted,

They are not behaving according to the Sunnah, their practice is unislamic and maybe women should discipline them. Meetings should not be rough and if they are, the entire format of the meeting is corrupted.

Men somewhat weakly countered that elections should become more “dignified” before women participate. Ruqaya also dismissed male leaders’ statements that it would be inappropriate for a woman, if she were the only one elected to the ASJA executive, to sit at a meeting among men. Instead, she argued, “If there are fifteen men and one woman there is no problem. The problem is with one man and one woman alone. If there are other men there and they are honourable, they are witnesses and if a women is properly attired, she can speak to anyone”. “Yes, leadership means headmanship”, she challenged, “but I do what Allah not my husband tells me. Women are certain to speak to issues men won’t speak to. They have an opinion and a role to play”.

She criticized the YWMA for “leaning to the domestic side of women’s role like helping with food and decorations.” She explained,

This bothers me. Women were relegated to that role in the beginning, we didn’t just initiate this role. Also, it was easy to turn to. But women have to support women and show a presence apart from men. We have to be consulted and have opinion.

Rather, she would like the women’s group to support those who want to learn and practice Islam so that women can read and interpret teachings for themselves. Her
concern with interpretation reflects modern values regarding women’s achievement and progress as well as purified Islamic practice based on formal study. These indicators of knowledge are “also significantly about empowerment through clarity of purpose and precision of enactment” (Khan 1995, 118). As she concluded, “Betty Friedan is now happening in Islam all over, but it has to happen in a Muslim way”.

Figure 25: Girls Playing While Mummies Pray

Conceptualisations of women as nurturers, sources of moral teaching and primary care givers defies many of the actual lives of Muslim women who may work, be involved in a range of organizations including non-Muslim ones and even be in politics. Yet, it has a powerful influence on how women see their role in their own community and in Islam. Partly, “return to spirituality” encompasses these roles. It therefore also empowers those who use it to affirm particular religious rights, traditions, interpretations and responsibilities.
3.6.4 Sanctifying Sociality

Return to spirituality is an ideal of continuously revitalised Islamic associational life. Like love for mas, it provides a language for reaffirming the importance of family. It also speaks to the protection of women and female honour, male headship and responsibility for leading the religious community, fraternity, equal rights, piety and cooperation amongst the jamaat. It guides relationships to God, money, women, men and organisational activities. It is both a spiritual and social ethic and provides the basis for negotiations over governance within the ASJA. While it seems to reinforce ideals of headmanship, it also empowers competing interpretations of gender, equality and justice. Ultimately, it is about situating livelihoods, labour, leadership, loyalty, reciprocity and networks in a spiritual cosmology. It is a cosmology that affirms sociality as necessary, right and, even, holy.

3.7 Conclusion

The stories and perspectives that emerge here speak against assumptions about “true” inner selves. Just because some San Fernandians are Muslim or middle strata Muslims or Muslim women doesn’t mean they all think or behave the same way. An individual may also behave differently depending on the situation or setting. In the same election, one male Muslim campaigner argued for justice and equality when talking about brotherhood, but returned to the safety of ‘tradition’ and headmanship when talking about women. Similarly, a female market vendor may give another ‘cut eye’ in the morning time for taking away her customer, but react differently in the afternoon or on a Friday after coming back from namaaz at the masjid.
Essentially, this chapter sought to uncover the social politics governing conduct in San Fernando. I have shown how the dispositions explored here are situated in daily practices and relationships, and both reflect and shape norms. While each reveals different cosmologies, it is also possible to see how they collectively create a larger approach defined by a range of angles, emphases and layers. Consistent with the concept of habitus, scenes from the sites such as the market and mas camp show how habitual layers are created through sharing of knowledge with others, newcomers and younger ones. This stimulates shifts and changes, struggles and strategies.

These dispositions are deeply founded in what matters to women and men. What most matters is then woven through their connections to goods, money, time, illegality, emotions, leisure, space, leaders, bureaucracies, spiritualities, gender ideals, the nation, rights, elections, reciprocity, amenities, and other women and men. In other words, women and men’s relation to money, women or God are not isolated, but homologous. Behaviour and relationships in one situation affect and legitimize those in another. They show sharing of similar values and parallel ways of working out their contradictions. All these values include notions of reasonable or fair practice. They are limits to behaviours that may be exploitative, exclusionary or advantage. What matters, therefore, deeply informs the many points along which a politics of authority is negotiated. It is through the habitus emerging from lore that aesthetic authority emerges as legitimate.
4.1 Introduction

The last chapter’s ground-level view, of negotiations over participation and governance, showed social politics in action. In the following pages, I add another layer by exploring the tangle of lore and law. It is here that legal politics really makes its entrance. Questions of legitimate authority are worked out along points of interplay between social and legal politics. It is this politics of authority that I argue shapes public life. As I go on to show through ethnographic detail, public life is marked by the connections, overlap and continuum between social life and the state. Ordinary women and men’s voices are given more attention here whereas state officials’ explanations feature more prominently in Chapter 5. It is crucial to understand some of the interactions that characterise public life before moving on to the next chapter’s discussion of aesthetic authority and its chameleon character. In this light, this chapter pulls state actors and bureaucracies into
the frame, and evaluates how the concept of "public life" helps to explain what is going on in these pictures.

4.2 Publics and Public Life

Defining those working out ‘appropriate’ forms of roadside vending, Carnival leadership and patronage as ‘publics’ draws on German scholar Jurgen Habermas’ (1962) concept of the “public sphere”. For Habermas, a “public sphere” was defined by participation in deliberation. It was an arena created by the production and circulation of ideas and talk. It enabled him to elaborate a theory of political morality or ethical life. Habermas was concerned with a specific phase in the development of liberal democracy, and new kinds of democratic participation and elite hegemony. The relevance of his conceptualization is clearly limited by this historical and European context, and the exclusionary, sexist and classist aspects of his formulation (Fraser 1992, 113; Ryan 1992). However, as other scholars have done, I’d like to tease out some aspects that usefully connect to this ethnographic material.

Habermas’ critics have argued that the *bourgeois* public sphere was never *the* public sphere. There were always multiple publics continuously contesting its hegemony. Subordinated or peripheralised groups created their own public spheres. These alternatives could be understood in terms of the “constitutive stratification lines” (Dawson 1994, 199) that set out the possibilities available in their societies. Within these constraints, these counterpublics (Fraser 1992, 116) elaborated alternative styles of political behaviour and created their own arenas and ways to access public life. Civic associations, mosques, newspapers, parades and coffeehouses are all examples of settings

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1. It was constituted by a “masculinist” ideology and the “formal exclusion of women” (Fraser 1992, 114). It provided an associational base for elites to seek markers of distinction (Bourdieu 1984) and to exercise authority. Exclusion combined gender with ethnicity and class. As Nancy Fraser highlights, “new gender norms enjoining feminine domesticity and a sharp segregation of the public and private spheres functioned as key signifiers of bourgeois difference from both higher and lower social strata” (Fraser 1992, 115).

2. As Dawson (1994, 199) defines, “constitutive stratification lines refer to how societies have been systematically organized to provide favourable outcomes for privileged groups”. These outcomes may include material goods, life chances, status, individual autonomy and ideological privileging.
and institutions that enable citizens to discuss questions of common concern (Dawson 1994, 195). Similarly, roadside vending, mas making and ways of securing government work create spheres where discourses, common concerns and politics are worked out. These discourses create common interest, participation, agency and feelings of belonging. This is precisely what I describe below.

In public life, statist forms of politics including electoral and bureaucratic authority are far from hegemonic. I demonstrate that the state is only one among many different kinds of publics and, as I show, it is shot through with diverse forms and meanings of law. In her study of statism in public life, Yael Navaro-Yashin (2002, 3) suggests that the political is “unsuitable”, “fleeting and intangible”. In other words, public life is not about institutions or sites, but about the more messy arena where women and men both critique the state while their “simultaneous practices of reproduction, regeneration, and reification keep re-dressing it in a variety of garbs” (ibid, 4).

Navaro-Yashin rejects concepts like “public sphere”, “public culture,” “civil society,” and “the state”. She instead suggests “public life” as a site for the generation of the political”. She argues that this concept merges the stereotypical distinction between domains of “power” and “resistance”. In her useful framing, “public life” encapsulates,

…a precarious arena where it is the public (ambiguously referring to both the people and the state) that produces and recasts the political. When configured as such, the notion of the public in public life enables us to analyze people and the state, not as an opposition, but as the same domain. (ibid, 2)

I show just how the overlaps and interconnections among vendors, police, bureaucrats, political activists, mas makers and squatters create public life. Yet, against Navaro-Yashin’s reading of all participation as statist, I show that law works to recast the political in surprising ways.
4.3 The Shifting Shoreline of Legality

On a Friday afternoon under beating, 4.50pm sun, a jeep with police pulls up in front of the market vendors selling on one side of Mucurapo Street. Two Indo-Trinidadian males emerge. Selling has been brisk and vendors are irritated that they have had to start covering or packing up their goods, or at least pretend to, since they saw the jeep approaching. The policemen tell the vendors to move their stuff back and the elder one says, “This selling on the road have to stop. If you had a little thing to sell is okay but not if it becoming like a market!” He watches vendors continue to sell while keeping one eye on him. He walks up and down chatting with them. Many only move their goods back a little and some older women complain about how customers do not buy from inside where the goods are more expensive. Some continue to sell in smaller bundles on the pavement. These police clearly have good relations with the vendors and vendors consider them the “genuine” ones. Perhaps, if the market was still open, they would have been more likely to be strict and threaten to charge them for selling.

Vendors sell on the road because they consider it a “faster hustle”. Vendors even have regular customers who look for them on the road. Women and men coming from work
know that prices are cheaper there than in the market. This produces a steady, thick trade along the line of vendors. Fast turnover compensates for lower prices and the chance to "sell out". Many also like the excitement of Mucurapo Street. Most vendors who sell on the road do so because they have perishable goods that will spoil before the next selling day. Vendors will especially sell on the road when the market has been "slow" and they are left with a lot of goods. They may have recuperated their "capital" in the market, but are now concerned about making "interest" or profit which they will use for household needs, "paying sousou", buying fresh goods next market day or paying money owed to wholesalers for "trust goods". Those vendors who may not sell again for a few days, like from Tuesday to Saturday, are especially concerned about selling out.

Coming out too early is a risk and, if police pass by often, vendors will go back inside and wait until four pm to return to the road. Even if police pass by then, they feel more justified in staying on the road because the market is already closed. As one woman told me, "We are willfully wrong to sell during market hours because the market is open and we dening vendors inside a sale but after market closes it is fair to sell outside even if it is not legal". Vendors don't feel they pose a problem because, as one man said, "we ent blocking nowhere and we there to the edge of the road". Also, they feel that if they have invested a lot that day and "market is hard", they are compelled to earn some extra income. As one female vendor said, "supporting we family is more important than supporting the law".

When police arrive, the majority of vendors step back and wait for the police to go. A few will deliberately take a long time to pack up or pretend to start packing and hope the police will be satisfied, move away and then leave. Sometimes, the police then tell them to hurry up. Others "scramble" their goods fast and hide it between or behind the parked cars. Then, some will go for a walk, some will go in the bars and others will stay on the pavement to watch their goods. The police, usually two or three Indo- and Afro-Trinidadian men, alight from the vehicle and begin to walk up and down the road in front of the vendors telling them "pick up, pick up, move your goods". In lesser instances, they
tell them to move their goods back so that the road can be less congested\(^3\). Even more rarely, they arrest people. However, these are usually vendors selling from vans. The police feel that those selling on the ground are not selling a lot of goods whereas those with vans have a larger amount and stay on the road all day.

Vendors respond, “Officer tings hard inside”, “give we a chance”, “Officer what we go do with these goods, where we go get money?” Most of the vendors are women and most are older women. Not wanting a confrontation with police, they may just “give them a little cut eye [bad look] and then don’t entirely pack up your goods but put them aside and then come back after a while”. Vendors get irritated if the police stay too long because they feel they are taking away their sale. They “bad talk” the police and quarrel about how they are just trying to make “ah honest living”. However, I never saw any vendors refuse to move or defy police orders.

Open defiance is obviously discouraged by the force of police authority, fears of being locked up or charged and the risk of losing your goods. Reds, a mixed female vendor, told me that she has seen police take up people’s goods and throw them aside. Sometimes, vendors will just decide to go home after police have passed, especially if they expect them to pass again or if they only have a few goods left to sell. Mums, an Indo-Trinidadian with bright fushia hair, responded, “sometimes the police give so much trouble you can't sell so you pay extra [to a taxi] and take the goods home. What will you do? You can't fight”.

However, in addition to fear, vendors repeat this ritual with police out of what they call “respect”. The majority I interviewed and others I chatted with agreed that police were just doing their job and their duty, and that should be respected. They felt that the police “have their rights and we wrong doing what is illegal”, but reminded me that “we have to put out money for the goods so we have to sell what wouldn’t stay”. Yet, they don’t sell in front of the police because it is considered “unmannerly to their job”. One woman

\(^3\) The City Police said that none of them tell the vendors only to move back and maybe that was the Central Police or Traffic Patrol.
explained, “We have a right to move when they are doing their job so they would not rough and buff we. *We understand the police doing their job and we doing we own*. Essentially, vendors realize that any negotiation with police first rests on respecting their authority and recognizing that they have to be seen doing their job because those are their orders”.

However, vendors also complain that some of the police are “insulting”, “like hogs” or “talk to you like beast” and threaten to take vendors to the station. Vendors say some police tell them “they would show you the other side of them if we play harden” and “they will move your goods for you if you don’t want to move them”. Angie, a young Indo-Trinidadian, complained that the police don’t tell the vendors “good afternoon”, just “rough up vendors because they want to make us fear higher authority”.

Others might just tell the vendors to move back or to pack up, that they know they are not supposed to be selling on the roadside and that the law says no selling near the market. Some police reportedly tell vendors that they can come back after, but to move while they are there. I observed the police once turning up after a fight over space had broken out between two male vendors. It wasn’t too much of a fracas. The stronger vendor simply cuffed the other who wouldn’t make some space on the road for him, the other vendor fell, and retreated saying he would get the police. They came, talked congenially with both and arrested no one.

They left after telling the men that all of them have to sell on the road and to make sure that they did not make them have to come back. Vendors around the men openly commented and later joked about what had happened. The police often tell vendors to get a stall in the market, but the majority sell somewhere in market already. Those that need to sell out because they are daily paid vendors selling three days a week do not want a monthly paid stall both because of the expense and because they don’t necessarily want to have to work in the market everyday.
The majority of vendors felt the police talk to them good “except when vendors are stubborn and don’t want to move”, when vendors take up too much space or go on the road too early. In comparison to their brusque threats, police do not often take vendors to the station or take their name down. Rather, vendors felt they often gave them “a chance” because they know them after all these years selling on the road and know they are trying to “make a dollar”. Mums, who felt that police didn’t really harass vendors after market hours, said, “I find them very good because we not supposed to be selling on the road especially when market open. That is part of their job so anybody vexing for that fooling theyself, we not supposed to be selling on the road and we taking a chance so when they say “pack up”, pack up”.

Miss Cleo agreed, “We can’t jastle (jostle) police, we doing our job and the police doing theirs. You have to respect the police and doh sell right in front dem”. Her goods were still in boxes in a tight corner between parked cars, and she was looking to see if the police would walk back past her before putting them out. Vendors will comment on others who start to sell too soon after the police have walked past them and agree that they were “disrespecting the police because you not supposed to sell when they are there”. Basically, obey in front of police, disobey only behind their back, and negotiate
however and whenever you legitimately can. Other than interrupting their sales, few vendors I interviewed had any problem toward police.

Most vendors try not to have personal interaction with police and will quietly pack up and move back. The vendors say that sometimes the police understand, sometimes they have family selling or they see how the market runs [meaning they understand vendors have “to eat” too]. They also report that when some police retire, they start selling in the market. Neither police nor vendors mentioned this, but I observed that about one third of the vendors looked between fifty and seventy years old. How can police really “rough up” these aged, hard working, mostly Indo-Trinidadian “nanis”?

However, there is also a great deal of talk about police taking bribes from vendors who offer them goods, drinks or even money that a few “put up” together. Lance said he saw a policeman “hustle two bags of ochro”. Clevon added that he has seen police taking money. An Indo-Trinidadian woman, who sells with her daughter Janine, said she and others contributed to money they “put up” to give police. In another instance, she described how she “put in a lil $10 with others to buy Mackeson (stout) for the police”. This is clearly not equivalent to handing the police money. However, as she put it, “Well, it come like a bribe because the police then let you stay”. Another said that they fill up their bag and leave it and pick it back up when they are ready to leave work.

Less than half of those I interviewed said they had never seen police accept bribes. Others said they never see them take money, only beer and goods. These sightings cannot really be confirmed, but they are part of the folklore of the road and an accepted story. Vendors didn’t have strong feelings about police accepting drinks, goods or money. It was a source of juicy gossip more than anything else. When it helped them maintain good relations with police or get a chance to sell longer on the road, it satisfied some of everyone’s needs and gave them greater bargaining power.

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4 “Nani”, meaning grandmother, is a common Hindi word used by Indo-Trinidadians.
Vendors appear basically law-abiding. They support the idea of having police and, usually, even agree that police are correct to move vendors selling on the road before mid-afternoon. Some have no problem with how police deal with them, but criticize other vendors who “play harden” and deserve police officers’ buff [rebuke]. They consent to legal authority, perhaps in many aspects of their lives, but not all the time. When vendors start selling on the road after 4pm when the market closes, the authority of market life begins to rise like heat off the sweltering road.

In this atmosphere, “we doing we own” expresses what they feel is necessary and reasonable. A too brusque attitude by police is considered advantage. It is excessive because it denies the higher morality of need and it ignores vendors’ basic agreement with the law in other instances. It does not make sense because police officers relate to market vendors in the wider context where they may know them for years, from their villages or as family, where they too may end up selling when their retire or where they accept gifts from vendors. Their relationships with vendors make their roles as law enforcers porous and, complementarily, make respecting vendors’ illegal practices legitimate.

*Everybody have to eat* creates a public that includes both vendors and police. It marks the existence of women and men who see illegality as reasonable within the “field” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 101) of market life. In this sense, this disposition creates a public that crosses distinctions between social life and the state. This public is made up of women and men who not only sell or buy vegetables, but who may have once been police, who may have family who are police, or who may make mas at Carnival time. Their belonging in this public, therefore, also has implications for their participation a range of other fields. In other words, publics are made up of women and men with a plurality of perspectives, with internal differences and antagonisms, and with a publicist orientation that enables them to participate in different publics and different publics to overlap (Fraser 1992, 127).
Interactions between vendors and police work out aspects of illegality because they mobilize discourses, for example, of need, empathy and friendship. These discourses are not only limited to these meetings at the roadside, but are open-ended, accessible and have “infinite axes of citation” (Warner 2002, 63). This is how come they appear in homologous form in other dispositions such as love for mas and contacts. It is also how come women and men don’t have to know each other personally or even at all to share discourse in a context of routine action. This is what Michael Warner calls “normative stranger sociality” (2002, 56). This means that participation, and not ascriptive identity, creates commonalities (Fraser 1992, 127).

The commonalities shown in this chapter exemplify how even the exercise of state power appears to be more defined by sociality than legality. At the same time, forms of state power clearly infiltrate social life. Both police and vendors draw on bases for legitimacy grounded in marketing or law or their participation in publics that have nothing to do with either. Intersecting counterpublics are on display here, allowing a view of women and men’s concerns, commonalities, competing sources of authority and styles of political action. This roadside moment pulls together women, men and the state in ways that highlight the many faces of law in public life.

4.4 Competing for the King of the Road

Like scenes on Mucurapo Street, meetings between bandleaders and state bureaucrats show how talk, discourse and negotiation make multiple publics. In these publics, some participants, such as the San Fernando Carnival Committee, have an institutional base and others have other strengths. Not all publics include or empower everyone. This is especially so in stratified societies and explains why there are counterpublics or subpublics. As Nancy Fraser suggests, therefore, a critical eye should be directed to “a form of public life in which multiple but unequal publics participate” (1992, 128).
Women and men in a counterpublic are particularly aware of its subordinated status. Counterpublics’ aims are transformative. They put forward alternative, rather than simply replicative discourses that may be generally regarded with hostility. Such response reflects the context of a “hierarchy of stigma” (Warner 2002, 87). Yet, as meetings in City Hall show, it is far more than official roles and rules that make publics of differing authority.

San Fernando Carnival Committee meetings are usually held in City Hall. In this nineteenth century British colonial style building, official pictures of past mayors encircle the large meeting room. A rectangular formation of heavy wooden tables sits atop a raised platform at the far end of the room. This is where San Fernando City Council meetings are held. During Carnival Committee meetings, a couple of the long tables are placed in front of the platform facing an audience in rows of wooden chairs. This is where bandleaders sit.

When bandleaders met at San Fernando Carnival Committee meetings, they usually talked about how they don’t exert their bargaining power enough and never threaten to boycott Carnival. Afterwords on the pavement, they constantly discussed forming a union because they feel the National Carnival Bands Association (NCBA) doesn’t look after
South bandleaders' interests. They complained that the committee doesn't respect them enough, and should try to get bigger prizes and fix a route that works for the bandleaders. They generally expressed a lot of skepticism toward the committee and dreamt of running the Carnival themselves.

In meetings, the Mayor congratulated himself and the committee, for example, for paying prize monies early, holding early planning meetings for Carnival and concluding their Carnival post-mortem early in the year. The City Corporation Councillors at the head table often wore formal clothes and suits. They comprised the Mayor, Councillors, Aldermen and the Secretary of the committee. In contrast, the usually twenty or so bandleaders dressed informally. Typically, there were few women. This underscored continuing male dominance of the carnival industry (Mason 1998, 145). The Mayor mainly conducted the meeting and the following is a typical example of its tenor:

_Mayor:_ Everyone knows each other here by first name and we need to work together.

...  
_Bandleader A:_ Who decided the route this year?

_Mayor:_ Me and the Police Commissioner. The route can't be changed. We brought you all here to discuss it with you.

_Bandleader A:_ Why it can't change?

_Mayor:_ We getting business people on Carib Street involved and we can't blank them. What was taken into consideration was plans so I don’t have to apologise to the Muslims and Hindus like what happened for City Week. 

_Bandleader B:_ We agreed last meeting not to pass on a route that has no prizes. This is we not the Mayor’s Carnival. They letting him dictate and interrupt the culture.

_Bandleader A:_ This is not a discussion when we come here, is ah domination. Meet the bandleaders halfway with the route they want. We are the veterans, we know what we and the bands feeling.

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5 City Week, re-established in November 2003 as the Mayor's state- and city-centred personal project, included Carnival-style Mud Mas and large trucks blaring soca. Taking an unplanned route, some trucks and revelers passed in front of the San Fernando Jama Masjid during Ramadan evening prayer. Muslims present were offended and the Mayor publicly apologized. He then applied his City Week lesson to Carnival regulations.
Secretary: Yes, you presented a route, but His Worship [the Mayor] and the Police Commissioner decided on a final route. Yours wasn’t considered.

Mayor: I never saw the route put forward.

Police: Well, I never met before to discuss this. Let’s have a post mortem after Carnival.

Consultant on committee: We working hard to return life to the Carnival. We are promoting San Fernando internationally but we are not getting a sense of the reciprocal. We are talking about presenting [Carnival as] a product. All the demands are coming from you. What are bandleaders bringing for when people come here?

Bandleader A: What if we produce no mas? What if we take our mas to Port of Spain?

Mayor: [Walking out] I cannot take this.

Convener: We need to protect people who come out to see the carnival and bands might cut the route if there are no points there. It makes control, safeguarding easier. We want to facilitate the masqueraders and bands. You are the stakeholders.

[His approach changed the mood].

Consultant: But we can’t make everyone happy.

Convener: I think the bandleaders have a case and should be assisted. We will sit down and plan Carnival 2005 early [general agreement to this suggestion]. The NCC treats us like a village. Yet, we have stickfighting finals, Soca Monarch semis, Chutney Monarch finals, National Small Band finals etc and we as a Council feel proud of our plans.

Bandleader C: How much is the prize money, how come we don’t know in advance?

Bandleader D: We are a young band coming up and all we hear is problems with big bands dominating things. Making me think to leave them. So if the police make a structure, let’s follow it.

Convener: We are trying to make things work for the betterment of San Fernando.

Consultant: Make San Fernando your priority. You have to show your commitment.

Bandleader E: If you make it lucrative we will come back [from Port of Spain Carnival].

Bandleader B: Let’s make plans that work for San Fernando bandleaders.

Regardless of what other committee members felt in that meeting, according to one, “it was too late to do anything” and “we had to support the Mayor”. The Committee itself did not appear to make decisions based on consensus. Apparently, committee members
felt they “could not stand up to the Mayor and tell him he is wrong” about the route and his approach to bandleaders. Certainly, they would not break rank publicly.

In fact, on Carnival Tuesday, two bands and their King and Queen costumes had to pass each other on a road that could not fit the large costumes. It was also a bad plan because trucks and masqueraders from different bands also had to cross each other on the street. Later, the Mayor pointed out that it didn’t work out, but that they were new to the Committee and mistakes would be made. He dismissed bandleaders’ concerns about the route saying, “One mas leader who you know well would like to have that small route in San Fernando so that he can finish by 2pm and go to another location to play mas. They go to other areas to play and that is why they don’t care if San Fernando mas grows. They care about money in pocket and being able to hustle Carnival in Port of Spain, Arima and Chaguanas because of the type of mas they play. The loyalty is not there. He does not only play mas in San Fernando so don’t come to inflict rules and conditions here because of an ulterior motive which is to go somewhere else and hustle. I will not have my city pulled down and stagnated because of greed”.

This characterization of mas leaders as participating not out of a cultural virtue, but only for self-interest enables the SCC to position itself as the legitimate public voice for Carnival. The Mayor cast mas makers as not caring about San Fernando Carnival, other masqueraders or people of the City. However, positioning them as, “only being driven by money” ignores that bandleaders do not make huge profits from Carnival. All the San Fernando bandleaders supplement their income in other ways. Yet, they remain involved precisely because of loyalty to mas, to San Fernando and to Trinidadian national culture.

At other times, the committee and the bandleaders reach agreement. This usually happens when their interests coincide. For example, the bandleaders were happy to participate in a City Week launch of Carnival when the SCC was arranging to give them some space on Coffee Street to show off their costumes. Also, meetings tend to progress more smoothly when the Convener, a steelband leader himself, negotiated with the mas bandleaders, called them stakeholders, described the SCC members as facilitators and told those in the
meeting to make decisions by a show of hands. It is significant that his long involvement in the steelband movement gave him greater credibility and trust than the recently involved Mayor and some of the Councilors.

In meeting following Carnival 2004, the Mayor attempted to convince bandleaders that the route one bandleader presented was insufficient and could get the Mayor “thrown out”. He asked, “How could you bring all the carnival in San Fernando West and not go into an equitable part of the Prime Minister’s community in [the constituency of] San Fernando East? I come from San Fernando West, I was campaign manager for the MP. They will say I only looking after there. I am a politician. I have to consider everybody”. He underscored his view with that of that police present who thought the suggested route crowded too many women and men into a small area. Further cajoling, the Mayor told the bandleaders to consider passing the poor house so that the elderly and poor could see the masqueraders. He emphasised, “Let us think of where most of us are going”. He concluded that they shouldn’t “study money but give something back”. He often reiterates this point that they should give back to San Fernando, and by extension, the committee.

The route discussion ended with the Mayor telling the bandleaders to go back and talk amongst themselves and agree to his route. He wanted them to consider his position as a facilitator of many different stakeholders and as a politician. He told bandleaders they had to make a sacrifice. As he put it, “This is not about you. This is about San Fernando’s Carnival”. A bandleader grumbled that, “We were here doing our thing for 20 years for only so much profit each year and plenty family and friends’ free work and here he is telling us how if we don’t come into his project we are bad people not supporting San Fernando Carnival”. Others on the Committee didn’t blame the bandleader for his view.

When one bandleader talked about another, famous for many years in San Fernando, who had played mas in Port of Spain that year, the Mayor responded, “that is because he is not a patriot”. In desperation, he even tried to convince the bandleaders to give him a “bligh” (an easier chance) because he had paid their prizes by borrowing from the City
Corporation because the NCC didn’t yet send money. He went on, “This is a give and take situation. Why don’t you all work with me? All you want is money, money, money”. There appeared to be a clear attempt by the committee to harness what already exists as the festival for what will end up being prestige for the Mayor, the committee, the PNM and the government.

Loyalty to San Fernando was a central theme in meetings with bandleaders as he cajoled them to cooperate. He felt bandleaders should oblige because it makes the work of the police and other state branches easier when it comes to preventing theft, vandalism or violence. He admitted that the turnover of power every three years, when there is an election at the Local Government level, makes it hard to maintain continuity in the SCC. In interviews, mas maker Lionel Jagessar agreed, “These new people feel they know how to run Carnival and they would not discuss it with the bandleaders, people who really in the Carnival business. After they make their faults and realize their mistakes, then they come to us. Then, about the third year we would get them settle down, and we can’t even talk about money because we still trying to get them to understand what Carnival is”.

Amidst protracted disagreement, the Councilors, Secretary and Mayor looked visibly frustrated with the bandleaders. They openly shook their heads at their non-cooperation. Some Councillors covered their mouths with their hands and laughed at ideas they thought were unrealistic. Some openly rolled their eyes. Even the Secretary, who works the hardest to raise money and to organize activities, expressed her opinions while taking minutes. She shook her head when she thought bandleaders are raising frivolous or over-demanding points or misrepresenting some information. She directed quite disciplinary looks to those speaking when she considered them wasting everyone’s time.

In contrast, the bandleaders turned around to talk to someone next to or behind them or shook their heads vigorously in disagreement. However, far less did I observe them slumping in frustration, laughing at what the SCC members said or rolling their eyes. This behaviour of the Council appears to be a clear exercise of power by those who think they deserve cooperation and deference.
Generally, bandleaders do not offer a unified position to the SCC's plans. Primary concern is to lobby for increased prizes and expanded opportunities to win prizes. Bandleaders are truculent about the route. They are also ambivalent about the committee and National Carnival Commission generally. As Mason (1998, 123) notes a member complaining, "They want the NCC to guard carnival but they also accuse them of bringing it down". The San Fernando Carnival Committee does not always offer a unified voice. However, members ritually invoke notions of loyalty to San Fernando and to Carnival, and ideas of sacrifice and duty. Carnival participation is turned into an opportunity to validate the SCC's authority. The SCC assumes its state-derived authority should be recognized, and that Carnival's "purpose" is to make everyone happy.

As Eriksen (1992, 67) points out, successful nationalism must legitimize state power while simultaneously making citizen's lives appear inherently meaningful. When bandleaders remain unconvinced, the SCC resorts to various forms of domination. Legal authority, appeals to all popular bases of participation, and even to informality ("we all know each other by first name") may fail. Bandleaders may give in publicly, but they do not give up. Points of disagreement may therefore remain unresolved over decades and successive governments.

In its attempts to appropriate, regulate and 'facilitate' Carnival, the state relies on the authority of patronage, developmental objectives and law. However, the bandleader, King or Queen of the private space of the mas camp and the public space of the road, is already legitimized by those who work and play with the band. Bandleaders clearly feel that, as artists and experts, they hold equivalent moral ground and that the state is not the legitimate authority over Carnival. They must, nonetheless, negotiate because of state prizes and penalties. Carnival also provides a livelihood. Bandleaders may unequally participate in decision-making, yet they are not simply 'weak' publics with no decision-making power. They make their own decisions, and bring competing styles and norms in
which even some committee members (who are also involved in mas and steelbands) participate.

Like the City police, Committee members have clear legal and institutional power in this skirmish over authority. Yet, it is those whose authority is popular and potentially unlimited (as any number may play in the band from year to year) that informally lead Carnival. Bandleaders prioritize discourses of equality, cooperation and autonomy despite their many other ways of relating to workers and Carnival itself. They carry this "rhetorical action through which a post-colonial Trinidadian community is symbolically constructed" (Waite 1993, 195) to their interactions with state actors. These informal modes of culture therefore have implications for their negotiations with the San Fernando Carnival Committee.

Leadership of women and men, kind of mas played, affiliation with the nation and the making of "national" culture contests authority based on law and patronage. This clearly

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6 Even the Mayor can be seen in a jouvay band making fun of public bad-talk about himself. Jouvay is derived from the French Jour Overt. It marks the beginning of Carnival in the pre-dawn hours of Monday morning with bands of revelers covered in mud and paint, and costumes making fun of popular issues and personalities.
speaks to the authority that counterpublics can potentially wield. Mas makers clearly treat the state as a patron. However, this role doesn’t necessarily confer legitimacy. Unlike the picture emerging from the San Fernando King’s Wharf, here the relationship between patronage and authority is split. Patronage provides only one of several competing bases for authority because bandleaders repudiate obligations based on patronage. They welcome state participation, but not state domination.

For its power to be legitimate, the Carnival Committee must, somehow, also become a King of the Road. It must, therefore, capture leadership of the spirit of Carnival, not just its bureaucratic organization. In this context, state actors resort to appropriating bandleaders’ loyalties to the nation and culture. Committee members engage in stickfighting styles of striking, retreating and “grandstanding” (boastful or threatening talk). In doing so, they find themselves forced to appeal to informal conceptions of participation that, ironically, separate nation and state. Attempts to substitute state-centred versions aim precisely to manage and market how these two are brought together. Committee meetings, therefore, show authority darting through “infinite axes of circulation” as it is continually manipulated in the parry and thrust of negotiations.

Negotiations in City Hall parallel those on the road just as Carnival creates another kind of public. Yet again, it is useful to acknowledge that mas makers may also sell in the market or live on the Railway Line and committee members may also be bandleaders or members of the San Fernando Jama Masjid. Within public life, publics overlap. The state again appears as one among many publics, but with greater institutional and legislative power. Yet, it remains unclear where legal politics and social politics end and begin. This is why the interplay of lore and law has chameleon effects.
Figure 31: Prices at the Entrance to the Railway Line

Drawing on Navaro-Yashin’s (2002) conceptualization of public life, I have been illustrating the contestation between different publics and the ways some are subordinated to others (Fraser 1992). Subordination may be due to socio-economic or gender inequalities. Or, some publics may be “weak” while others “strong”. It may also result when some issues are labeled ‘private’ and cut off from legitimate public discussion and contestation (Benhabib 1992, 91). *Masjid* leaders’ religious interpretations about women’s disenfranchisement, the Carnival Committee’s marketing of Carnival, the police authority of law, and even the privatizing of patronage as “individual entrepreneurship” all exemplify specialized attempts to enclave issues from being legitimate public or political matters. Sites such as the market or *masjid* present formal restrictions, but others such as the Railway Line express a rhetoric of privacy or discursive privatizing that is negotiated by everyday practices.

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7 Strong publics have decision-making authority. For example, Parliaments that function as a public sphere within the state are strong publics. Weak publics participate in more than “mere autonomous opinion formation removed from authoritative decision making” (Fraser 1992, 136). Yet, as Fraser concludes, “any conception of the public sphere that requires a sharp separation between (associational) civil society and the state will be unable to imagine the forms of self-management, interpublic coordination, and political accountability that are essential to a democratic and egalitarian society” (ibid, 136).
The workers that make their appearance here participate in public life as members of a neighbourhood of squatters who often petition their political representatives for basic amenities. They also participate as women and men whose area of residence carries a social stigma in the city. Additionally, they are members of religious groups and other areas of Trinidad, participants in informal saving schemes such as a *sou sou* and customers with monthly payment plans with furniture giant Courts. They are also a segment of a larger public that participates in general and local-level election campaigns and voting. They do not participate out of civic virtue in its impersonal, neutral and universal sense. Rather, voting and campaigning enable them to be a part of wider publics that include parents with children in government schools or families that can afford groceries at the supermarket.

Through informal actions such as talking to a known party activist or formal actions such as registering for a party group, they establish communication networks across stratification lines. These are personal, reciprocal and bound within relationship. They also normalize alternative, informal styles of political behavior and ways of accessing public life. These workers-voters constitute a public in relation to higher-level party activists who formally and informally weave themselves into different government offices and practices. They are a public in relation to voters who cannot get or do not need government jobs. While they are not a strong public in Nancy Fraser’s (1992) sense, they do make binding decisions – they vote. As exemplified below, the meaning of their vote also traverses “infinite axes of circulation”. It is significant not just in terms of politics, but also for notions of family, neighbourhood and work.

Among those in CEPEP, two got their job through knowing someone in PNM politics, four were hired because they knew a CEPEP contractor who was looking for workers and who was also involved in PNM politics, and two got their jobs through someone already employed with CEPEP. Therefore, for the majority, contact with a party activist enabled them to access this employment. For example, Leroy explained that an extended family member was “expecting PNM to be back in power and told me I could get a CEPEP work because he knew people and was in the campaigning thing”. Henrick, an Afro-
Trinidadian who sold fish after work replied, “I was working a ‘ten days’, my niece was the foreman and told me how CEPEP was a everyday job for a year. She is a member of a PNM party group and could recommend who need the work. She arranged it for me and carried in my ID card photocopy and she filled out the form for me”. A fortnight later, he started work. Four workers knew the contractors informally, and this contact rather than simply one through the party, enabled them to be among the first picked. The majority began to work when the programme began in September 2002. Only one first joined in March 2003. Everyone had to fill out an application form and a National Insurance Scheme (NIS) form if they had no NIS number.

Interestingly, six of eight of the CEPEP workers previously worked with the URP. Most of them got the work through someone “coming and picking up names” and were able to work between two and twenty jobs per person. Those with contacts secured the higher number. In one extreme example from the CEPEP workers, Henrick confided that he was able to work about sixty ‘10 days’ through a woman he regularly sold fish to on the Wharf who worked in “a place where they could get it for me”. He did ten one year and twelve the year after. A CEPEP contractor, who was the man residents go to when they need a ‘10 days’ and who they described as “running URP”, later secured CEPEP jobs for two workers. This contact between political activists and marginalized women and men is very important and presents a reciprocal relationship. The activist knows who needs work and whom she or he considers a good worker, and the workers look up to her or him as a low level patron and give them their loyalty.

Writing in 1974 about patronage over the past two decades, Susan Craig describes political activists’ style of leadership as “highly personalist” and reinforcing PNM control in districts (1974, 61). Party infiltration of state bureaucracy also produced party activists who themselves became low ranking patrons. Such persons could bring projects and resources to communities due to their place in the party hierarchy and their own contacts. Their power was also “patronizing” in the sense that these leaders saw themselves as doing things for others, and they expected gratitude. Patronage to party supporters and clients therefore also acted as a medium for controlling dissidents (ibid, 51). Craig (ibid,
38) notes that their approach would effectively "by-pass all existing institutions and, indeed, seek to be a substitute for normal democratic process". As Carl Stone concluded over thirty years ago, in a context of high unemployment, economic discontent, scarcity and difficulty accessing social resources, governing parties will be especially able and willing to develop patron-client relations. This occurs through distribution of welfare, employment and income along partisan lines (Stone 1974).

Middle-ranking party activists I interviewed said that one can get a CEPEP job through "filling out a form", but the process requires far more networks than that and in practice relies on a contact system which is interwoven with party politics and control of the state. For example, one contractor said that he hired workers by going to various parts of the community and asking people, and by looking for influential community women or men who could recommend persons to be considered. Another said that workers came to her asking for a job. Yet, a third explained that staff in the PNM Constituency Office chose her teams of workers as she was busy overseeing the Local Government Election. Another staff member in the office explained that she chose several of the workers hired by a fourth contractor. She also assigned herself a foreman position, but the contractor soon replaced her with his wife.

Among URP workers, two got help from a member of the PNM who has influence in the URP system, three got help when the URP person, a low level political appointee, passed around taking names from the area for '10 days' work. Women and men interpret the opportunities this person offers in racial terms and argue that if it is a UNC person, only "Indians" get the jobs and if it is a PNM person, it is only "Negroes". One person felt that she secured work because they campaigned for the PNM. As Baby Girl told me,

The URP was passing around to get names, they was using a voting list and asking people if they were voting or not. I say why vote if I not getting work and just before the election I get a '10 days'. I took it and then for the election helped them campaign by going around with a list asking people to vote and organising a car for them. They gave us breakfast, lunch and even dinner. All campaigning people got a promise for a '10 days'. I got mine and they told me I would get one every other
fortnight. We had to wait to see who won the election, but the result was 18-18. UNC and PNM wasn’t giving each other’s group’s jobs who was seen in a PNM or UNC rally or t-shirt or with a flag.

Only Baby Girl reported going to the URP office to sign her name on a list. None of the other URP workers reported going to the Constituency Office, but this a common practice generally. Baby Girl had secured many successive URP jobs through campaigning for the UNC, but could not turn around and openly support the PNM. She, therefore, had no contacts to turn to when the UNC lost power. However, she felt she secured a URP job under the PNM because she told party activists she would vote for the party.

As Craig points out, while patronage overlaps with state-funded welfare, it essentially cultivates clients’ obligations to a patron and feelings of continued dependence. As well, it undermines formal state channels (1974, 9). It is not simply about assuaging poverty and destitution, distributing income and providing social security. Rather, patron-client relations operate through reciprocal obligations between those in authority and those that need their help. These become the very basis for government legitimacy. A legitimate government meets women and men’s needs, is able to rely on their reciprocity to win and control the state, provides loyal supporters with administrative rank, and functions through direct, personal relations between political parties and voters. The stories of the women working with the URP suggest that both the People’s National Movement and United National Congress secured support and distributed patronage through the state and its resources.

The majority of URP-working women that I interviewed applied for a URP job because they needed an income to survive. One woman’s husband, the main breadwinner, became sick, another couldn’t afford her son’s booklist, a third because her husband was “not working and not making tide [fishing]” nor looking for work so her daughter could not afford “passage” (taxi fare) to school. A fourth woman simply needed economic independence. The number of fortnight jobs that these women worked was usually due, not only to “who you know” but, to several factors. For example, it depended on whether a woman had often asked for her name to be put on the waiting list, if her partner was
unemployed regularly and what the money was needed for. Miss Mavis infrequently requested a ‘10 days’, but always tried to get one in September when she had to buy schoolbooks for her two sons. Gail always tried to get a ‘10 days’ when she has to buy her Carnival costume. Her sister, Aunt Leela, said that she “was good” with a particular party activist “running URP” and “sometimes I was getting back to back jobs but found that unfair because somebody was getting take off the list so I wanted only two back to back”. Gail added that Aunt Leela “used to make sure I get regular 10 days by getting put me on the list”.

Among CEPEP workers, only three of the eight I interviewed said they had worked for a political party before getting their job. This group said they put up posters, carried women and men to vote and helped in campaigning. Of this minority who helped the party, Mr. Ross stopped because he began to feel “politicians are liars”. Renegade, Josanne’s common-law partner, worked for the UNC in 1995 because he knew the candidate for his voting area (outside San Fernando) and, in the next election, for the PNM because he was “born in a PNM house”. Among URP workers, three of seven helped a political party before getting their job. Most of them were part of campaigning. Overall, the majority of workers were not involved with a political party before getting their jobs. However, as highlighted earlier, their contacts with political activists were key to securing employment.

The elision between squatters, voters, party activists and workers plays out in CEPEP and URP work teams. Four of the eight CEPEP workers, comprising one Dougla woman, one Indo-Trinidadian woman and two Afro-Trinidadian men, agreed that workers are “mainly PNM”. As Leroy reflected, “I feel working CEPEP, if a person want to say he belong to a different party, he will keep that to himself. Either belong or keep silent. You supposed to hush your mouth if you are a UNC on the job”. Renegade agreed, “you have to act like you belong to one party, that is how de contractor puts it to you. He tells you “is PNM gave you this work and if you don’t support them, your job could be jeopardized”. He tells us we have to go to rallies. He told us we had to join the party, but that was nice to now have a card and number”. Listening in, Josanne agreed that workers are “mainly
PNM, but half the workers are UNC playing PNM to get a work. If they a UNC we run them out”.

Generally, the consensus was that workers are “mainly PNM, but people change parties and you never know how they vote”. Two workers felt that the teams comprise a mix of political loyalties, not mainly PNM supporters. Two men did not know. In comparison, five of seven URP workers felt that the majority of workers are from one party. All that said “yes” said, “mainly PNM”. Two of this group added, “but a few UNC” and one more of the group ended, “openly UNC people are less likely to get a chance”. Only Miss Beryl said “no” and Miss Mavis said she didn’t know.

Interestingly, six of eight CEPEP workers said that they joined a party or helped a party after getting their CEPEP job. Those that said “yes” said that the boss told them they had to join the party, that they helped out in the local government election, that they were “up and down night and day” with the party and handed out fliers before the local government election. They wanted to help because they both supported the party and have a job through them. Other reasons for joining the party after included, joining “just to help the party”, “was always PNM anyway so joining the party wasn’t a big deal”, “workers feel they have to show support to the party to keep their work”, “because de way how it was looking, you get a job and it seem as if you require to do this”, and “through the boss to support him”.

Josanne admitted, “it felt like you had to do it, everyone in de job was helping out. What if they send you back home, tell you not to come back in the morning?” As Mr. Ross, now a CEPEP worker said, “when I was doing URP, they were asking for party card – it was party card business”. He did about 15 URP fortnightly jobs after going to put down his name in a URP office. Another male worker added that he was not going to be campaigning for the party again. Only two of the seven URP workers did not join or help the party after getting their job. Four of the five who joined said they did that to improve the chance of getting more ‘10 days’. One was always a supporter and another was working a ‘10 days’ just before the election and so wanted to reciprocate by helping.
According to workers, joining a party and helping them campaign is common practice among those in CEPEP and URP. All eight CEPEP workers said that workers generally help at party events. Their reasons included, “they came round and ask but, CEPEP workers on whole are strong PNM supporters so in whole aspect of it, they want it, if it is a rally they coming”, “people have been asked to come help set up tents for rallies”, “some are party lovers and in party groups, especially the women, so they always in activities”, and “yes for election, they encourage workers to canvass and make sure people vote”. Five of the workers were regularly involved in party activities. They put up posters, brought people to vote, canvassed on local government election day or went to rallies. One said they help “for benefit to their family and kids” and don’t feel they have a choice.

The picture is the same among URP workers. All seven said that workers help at party events. Two added that “is who want to help and get the work” and that “workers help out on their own”. Usually, they describe the work as including campaigning, sticking posters, telling people about the party, going to rallies and being in a party group. As I observed in party group meetings I attended, the Constituency Executive will encourage workers that are members of or join party groups to see themselves as “agents of the party” and as “PNM representatives there everyday in the wider community”.

Figure 32: A CEPEP Worker Rests on the Wharf
Poverty and lack of income place groups such as these squatters in a dependent relationship. Yet, as shown below, while women and men may appear powerless in certain ways, they clearly maneuver registers of authority as they try to survive. Like market vendors, they negotiate their peripheral status by attempting to personalise the state and to directly access levels of hierarchy. They consistently use informal means to influence or access authority. This is how contacts constitutes a source of power. Residents on the Railway Line and King’s Wharf use their contacts to negotiate their belonging in a range of publics, and to improve their location within them. They therefore manage being squatters, neighbours, parents, workers, party activists, Carnival masqueraders and voters using the kinds of power their relations, practices and pretences can mobilize.

Just like market vendors, these workers rely on informality within the state system’s formal structures. In this case, they want to know their political activities will make their jobs more secure. Relatedly, therefore, they will also value limited non-participation of opposing groups. In other words, not everyone can equally access specific kinds of power even if it appears open to all. As Carl Stone (1986) points out of Jamaica, this means that those not belonging to the party in power lack equitable access to representation and help. Partisan allocation of scarce opportunities, therefore, creates the threat of resentment among those excluded, and fears of loss of power among those who benefit. This leads to political party representation mainly through electioneering, rather than through policy, consultation and related activities. It also works against political participation and organizing in its widest expressions.

Workers’ participation in elections and campaigning appears as a hustle based primarily on needs, desires to play Carnival, aspirations for savings or simply hopes for economic independence. Participation does not simply correlate with civic virtue or permanent identities. Rather, relations based on personal obligations, reciprocity and networks between individuals are foremost. However, these women and men also look for the best rewards and will present any face to the party offering. They may say they will vote for the party to get a job when they enter office, and then not necessarily vote. They may
campaign for one party and vote for another. Workers' informal actions shape and create public life by empowering a party to secure state resources, create jobs, label some practices "private" and reinforce alternative ways of accessing public life. This is another example of the switching, twisting and mimicry involved in playing a politics of authority skillfully. There is no established hierarchy of legitimacy, and the range of possible registers, including need, family, fun, clothes, friendship, promises and profit, are certainly not wholly dominated by law.

Today, all sorts of groups from pensioners to single mothers can potentially form influential groups of lobbyists or voters so that there is very different potential for interface with the state. This means that the nature of the state has itself changed to now accommodate, and as I show even appropriate, the kinds of political action that I describe in these sites. This does not mean I argue that market vendors or mas makers are vying for influence over the state. Rather, I use Habermas' notion of the public sphere in a wider, less institutional sense than originally intended. Instead, this study explores a variegated, decentred and democratic array of public spaces with diverse and intersecting practices. It also elucidates how they overlap or, as Dawson describes, form "overlapping sets of discourse communities" (1994, 207). As I show, the state appears as one of these. Its intersection with other publics highlights that, like the diversity of lore, law ends up looking like a good deal more than one thing.

4.6 Conclusion

Interestingly, these practices and relations differ slightly in important ways. For example, market vendors' informal values explicitly challenge formal rules by seeking to narrow their scope. They accept police authority, but their talk, action and negotiations work out different ways of and reasons for obeying or disobeying law. As I discuss further in the next chapter, although police do not need to appeal to these values, they nonetheless appear to share a sense of their legitimacy because both they and vendors have to eat. This shows one incarnation of the power and meanings that have the face of law.
From another angle, mas makers can compel local government officials to legitimize their power through an appeal to informal values. Officials, therefore, attempt to appropriate, control and ultimately replace mas makers' *love for mas* with their own meanings. In a way, these bureaucrats try to do with *lore* what vendors try to do with *law*. This registers a second version of how the state comes to behave and look like a variety of other publics.

Somewhat differently, patronage workers share with political authorities of all strata the practice, entrenchment and legitimizing of informal relations. *Lore* shapes deployment of state resources far more than *law*, though at this point it is hard to separate one from the other. CEPEP and URP programmes seem to function almost like a mas camp driven by need, reciprocity, leadership and loyalty even while they are motivated by elections, voting and office. As interactions among police and vendors or San Fernando Carnival Committee members and mas makers also suggests, weak and strong publics may be hybrid. Even squatters who have no official rank have strong decision-making power as voters.

These different pictures exhibit public life in San Fernando. It is made up of many competing and overlapping publics interacting under inequitable circumstances. State actors form only one of these and still they are constantly stepping into other publics for one standpoint or another. These interactions, and the bargaining that defines them, are part of continuous processes of redefining what is admissible for public deliberation and what values underlie relations among and between groups. They are also part of how women and men work out the range of legitimate meanings expressed by concepts such as nation, legality, enfranchisement, patronage and leadership. These pictures direct one's gaze beyond legislation and institutional authority, but also beyond informal actions.

The discourses underlying legitimacy are far from sitable or corralled to specific fields. They morph as they move and become attached to different practices and meanings. Each of the dispositions discussed here, *everybody have to eat*, *love for mas* and *contacts*,
offers a mixed bag of sources of legitimation. In other words, each brings unexpected kinds of power to negotiations over public space, the public purse and public culture. Each reproduces similar kinds of power, but gives them different significance and meaning across a range of sites, interactions, ideals and moments. They, therefore, work within and across fields creating parallels even among groups and encounters that seem to have nothing to do with each other.

Publics overlap because women and men have many identities, bases for belonging, ways of doing things and perspectives. They also overlap, however, because habitus creates homologous contradictions and consistencies in the encounter of lore and law. Although mas makers appear to be bargaining because of love for mas, this is another version or interpretation of everybody have to eat. Concomitantly, contacts works like love for mas to make informal leadership powerful. As I show further in Chapter 6, return to spirituality is far closer to love for mas and even everybody have to eat than first appears.

The ethnographic material in this study does not suggest that women and men's engagements with and appropriations of law are a sign of statism or reverence for the state. I think this part of how they survive rules as well as enable rules and a range of legalities to survive. Statism as "something beyond nationalism, as an identification not only or even necessarily with a nation, but with a reified and exalted state" (Navaro-Yashin 2002, 201) does not explain how vendors, mas makers, government workers at all levels and voters of different kinds deal with legislation or state institutions.

Navaro-Yashin suggests that state practices generate power productively (in addition to repressively). To this end, she argues that "statesmen" mobilize "self-generating" or "spontaneous" sites within society in order to reproduce and enhance state power. This is a historically specific and contingent synthesis of Foucault's repressive and productive hypotheses..." (2002, 132). Her critique of state-society dualisms is based on the role that the mundane, banal and quotidian sphere of civil society plays in generating state effects. It also reflects the ways that statespeople claim to represent civil society in their contestations over legitimate (control of) state power. For her, anti-state and "will of the
people” rhetoric is part of statecraft. Here, civil society becomes the symbolic ground on which legitimate state power is based.

Her approach to public life closely fits the interwoven experience of vendors and police, mas makers and government bureaucrats, squatters and party activists in San Fernando. However, their political actions do not seem to be about statism and they don’t necessarily enhance state power. Instead, they are more appropriately located in the interlock of lore and law, and their implications for shifting registers of legitimate power.

While all Trinidadians must interact with different manifestations of the state, the strategies, ideologies and consequences they also activate are highly variable. For example, one striking observation that emerges from the mas camp is that women and men are constantly creating a ‘nation’ that is not beholden to the state. In a way, this reinstates the social and informal even in official domains of authority. Yet, keep in mind, this doesn’t happen in a pre-determined, systematic way, but pragmatically and tactically. This is also why specific publics, such as the state, can today look so much like any Trinidadian market vendor and tomorrow like a San Fernando costume designer or squatter.

State domination can thrive in this context. Yet, there are many forms of power and meaning associated with law and many instances when it looks much like lore. These illuminate the nuanced ways that a variety of publics fundamentally recast an idea of the state and the terms of state legitimacy and authority, as well as their own. The negotiations I describe do not suggest that all those in whose imaginations the state circulates are “faces of the state” (ibid, 2).

Rather, they are social actors who move through the world as if there is no clear separation of social and state, and no non-negotiable boundaries on the flow of informality. Their activities enhance, perpetuate, fraction, infiltrate and transcend different spheres of public life, only one of which is the state. Participation by subordinated groups in subaltern counterpublics or even in hegemonic publics engages
with participation by dominant groups in both spheres. It is the tugs, weavings, appropriations and boundary-making practices defining their negotiations that make action in publics and counterpublics political. They show how typically powerful authorities are "contested, modified, and occasionally overthrown" (Fraser 1992, 140).
Chapter Five: Legitimizing Aesthetic Authority

5.1 Introduction

In the last two chapters, I have shown how habitus explains negotiations within and among publics. Issues of legitimacy and authority have dipped and surfaced alongside this discussion. Legislation, formal rules, officials and law generally do not have uncontested say. Instead, informality flows through formality in assorted ways at various gradations of power. The possibilities offered legitimize unconventional kinds of authority based on personal style, emotion, common sense, family, need or friendship. Publics of all kinds rely on the interlock between lore and law to manage their participation in governance of public life. This relation, therefore, creates a continuum where state officials at times appear not so far removed from those with less formal power.

Dispositions such as everybody have to eat or contacts offer up unexpected bases for power. They muddy and twist any clear hierarchy of authority. They merge and overlap publics of women and men who may never even have met. As well, they suggest the
underlying validity of informality, and even illegality, when considered reasonable. Each of these dispositions infiltrates social life and the state, taking on meanings situated in either or both spheres. This is why vendors, mas makers, squatters, police, bureaucrats and party activists appear as guises or versions of each of each other despite their location at different positions within social life and the state.

Chapter 3 showed how habitus emerges from lore. Chapter 4 showed this habitus within law because lore also operates there, reproducing the intersections and flow between the two. Whereas the last chapter continued to highlight the faces of those participating in lore even as angle shifted to the state, this chapter gives more space to officials' take on governance of public life. What are the perspectives from within law? I detail how officials create and maneuver a continuum along which they can justify the kinds of authority they wield. What are their implications? I first outline a conceptual scaffold that connects the relationship between law and lore to legitimate authority. After this, in the next chapter, I move back to informal social life, though I continue to focus on aspects of law there.

5.2 Legitimate Authority

Debates in modern political philosophy have pivoted on issues of participation, consent, freedom, trust, self-interest, the public good, obedience, representation, and the role of state branches and bureaucracies. Marx, for example, argued that state bureaucracies are "class instruments which emerged to coordinate a divided society in the interests of the ruling class" (Held 1989, 33). Max Weber, however, critiqued the view of state organization as only "parasitic' and a direct product of the activities of classes" (ibid, 1)

1 Another view, in his early writings, instead emphasizes “that the state generally, and bureaucratic institutions in particular, may take a variety of forms and constitute a source of power which need not be directly linked to the interests, or be under the unambiguous control of, the dominant class in the short term. By this account, the state retains a degree of power independent of this class: its institutional forms and operational dynamics cannot be inferred directly from the configuration of class forces – they are ‘relatively autonomous’ (Held 1989, 33). This view supports an idea of the state “as a potential arena for struggle which can become a key force for socialist change” (ibid, 36).
39). Instead, he maintained that bureaucracies were indispensable in all (and not just capitalist) large organizations and societies. They were, therefore, also necessary for modern statehood based on rational rules and legal regulations.

Nonetheless, Weber has been critiqued for neglecting the ways that those in subordinate positions in bureaucracies can increase their power. As Anthony Giddens (1979) highlighted, bureaucracies “may enhance the potential for disruption from ‘below’ and increase the spaces for circumventing hierarchical control” (Held 1989, 43). Marx would, of course, have also replied that bureaucracies are enmeshed in social and civil divisions and struggles. This suggests that struggle is itself ‘inscribed’ into state administration. Sociologist David Held agrees with Marx’s earlier, more nuanced view of the state as not simply “an unambiguous agent of capitalist reproduction” (ibid, 76). This is precisely because of the multiplicity of influences, as well as electoral and economic constraints that affect those in state bureaucracies.

In Held’s excellent critique of Habermas’ book, Legitimation Crisis (1975), he argues that theories of social cohesion and legitimation should not rely on an “internalized value-norm-moral consensus theorem” (cf. Giddens 1979, 87) to understand “the production and reproduction of action” (ibid, 88). Rather than normative, consensus-based approaches to legitimacy, he emphasises lack of consensus (dissensus) about norms, values and beliefs, and a “dual consciousness” among particular classes. Held disagrees that compliance means people accept state rule as legitimate. He instead highlights ambivalence, instrumental compliance, and pragmatic acquiescence. In other words, people attempting to make ends meet participate in the status quo because it offers some degree of comfort and security, and appears inevitable (ibid, 91).

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2 This argument is based on Held’s more fundamental critique of Habermas views of social integration as necessary for social and state stability. Instead, he highlights the moral approval of dominant groups, and the politically powerful and mobilized, as most important for the continuation of a social system (Held 1989, 88).
State power and political stability are, therefore, linked to patterns of values and norms, strategies of displacement and fragmentation\(^3\), continuing attempts to legitimize the authority of those comprising 'the state', economic compulsion and the depoliticisation of public-private relations, among other national and international factors. Rather than simply common values and general respect for state authority, discussions of legitimacy should take account of "a complex web of interdependencies between political, economic and social institutions and activities which divide power centres and which create multiple pressures to comply" (ibid 151).

5.2.1 Weberian Conceptions

One cannot discuss notions of legitimacy and authority without referencing German scholar Max Weber's writings on leadership (1947, 1958, 1962). His concern focused on the ways that authority, as leadership and domination, is legitimized and stabilized. For him, authority is, essentially, legitimate (use of) power. His famous schema included bureaucratic-rational-legal authority, charismatic authority and traditional authority. These categories often overlapped and combined in reality. Bureaucratic and legislated power, recognized personal and, even, spiritual power, and traditional practices were the key sources of legitimacy for each ideal type.

Bureaucratic and administrative power describes officials'\(^4\) legal domination based on generally agreed-to, formalized and written rules. This kind of authority is widely described as 'rational' because it includes standardized procedure, formal division of responsibility, hierarchy, technical knowledge and impersonal relationships\(^5\). People obey rules partly out of agreement, but also because legal domination is backed by legitimate use of force. In Weber's view, administrative and legal order backed by legitimate use of force defines the modern state. On the other hand, traditional domination is based on

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\(^3\) Held argues "that stability is related to the 'decentring' or fragmentation of culture, the atomization of people's experiences of the social world" (1989, 89). These limit understanding of "the organizational principles determining the allocation of 'value' and 'meaning' and alternatives to them" (ibid, 93).

\(^4\) Weber differentiated between bureaucratic officials and politicians. Whereas the first should impartially and impersonally exercise authority, partisanship and independent action mark the second.

\(^5\) However, while autonomy, neutrality and equality are supposed to be the hallmarks of bureaucratic practice, in reality such practice may be highly political, partial and personal.
authority that is immemorial, routine or handed down. It can be personal (but not personality-dominated), arbitrary, unorganized or informal, and what Weber would consider 'irrational'. It can exist at all levels, and includes cultural and religious habits and, historically, often patriarchal power.

Theoretically, while charismatic authority is between rulers and followers, bureaucratic authority consists of rules rather than rulers. On the other hand, traditional domination is defined by hierarchical relations shaped by established forms of social conduct. Not only do these overlap, they may dynamically and cyclically merge into each other. For example, charismatic domination may become routinized into bureaucratic power. Weber described an historical process towards rationalization. This perspective has received much critique. Writing about leadership in the Caribbean has often referenced Weber's characterization of charismatic authority (Singham 1968; Allahar 2001). Followers' relationships of loyalty and obedience, and their belief in leaders' qualities has been considered key to Caribbean leaders' domination. Trust, faith, informality, and a sense of vision and collective mission, rather than precedent, ritual and tradition, are given centre stage.

5.2.2 Contemporary Legal Anthropology Approaches

Key questions of the field ask about “who makes rules, who can undo them, how they are normalized and enforced, and how they are morally justified” (Moore 2005, 2). There is much that can be read into this literature for my own approach to law as wide-ranging, formally-empowered rules, positions, processes and practices. It’s worth noting that while I am interested in aspects of formality rather than in jurisprudence, legislation is a pier affording police and local government officials a concrete height of power. As I show in the next chapter, written constitutional and Sharia (Islamic) law similarly shape social institutions, economic practices and cultural forms in the ASJA.

6 In his Introduction to an edited collection of studies on charisma in Caribbean leadership, Allahar nonetheless notes that the male politicians who have led the Caribbean “were modern leaders, whose authority and legitimacy resided in their rational appeals to their followers, and the fact that their leadership was legally constituted” (2001, xii).
There are times when law has abstract value and is considered justifiable on its own terms or for ideals, such as equality or human rights, which it enshrines. However, these sites show important instances when law gains meaning only in relation to lore. It is not simply that women and men have a "dual consciousness", but that the bases for authority offered by lore and law are inseparably intertwined. What most matters to women and men is worked out through homologous connections to things, people, spaces and practices. Thus, their ways of relating to family and legislation, artistry and office, masculinity and leadership, and spirituality and enfranchisement are like chameleons blending, mimicking and darting across or away from each other. What matters shapes the way they navigate such different forms of power, creating a kind of legitimacy that is neither one nor the other because it is based on the value given to reasonable combination of the two.

Reasonableness provides a porous, irregular, unfixed and even slippery sphere of negotiation snaking within and across law and lore. It enables navigations that legitimize all sorts of conventional and unconventional forms of power, which may be justified by sociality, legality, leadership or simply efficacy. Popular participation in hierarchical social relations continually reworks ideals of order and balance in this way. This overall aesthetic or approach to normative life is what I call aesthetic authority.

5.2.3 Aesthetic Authority

Authority, for anthropologist Daniel Miller, is grounded in forging, maintaining and conducting relationships. It emerges from the ways that people, amidst great social heterogeneity\(^7\), make "highly integrated meaningful worlds, carefully crafted lives, with considerable consistency or clearly worked through contradictions" (2006, 3). People’s relationships may be to their bodies, people, things, practices and ideals. These shape and

\(^7\) Miller would agree with Held that contemporary economic, political and social life, or modernity, creates heterogeneity, dispersion and diversity. However, his position is the opposite of Held’s that theorizing about legitimate authority should be rooted in fragmentation and atomization.
are shaped by what matters to them, and the narratives they reproduce to make sense of their past and present.

Following Bourdieu (1972), Miller argues that early parental influences, later relationships and the wider cultural order build on each other. They create meanings that people work out daily. Past and present influences may be widely divergent and completely contradictory. People, therefore, choose to sometimes emphasise some influences more than others. The sense that they seek to make through their practices and relationships creates an overall, totalising order in their life. Miller calls this “cosmological architecture” (2006, 23), an “aesthetic”. This aesthetic is, in essence, a habitus. It expresses normativity, ideals of order and balance, and the centrality of practice. But while habitus derives from the normative social order, Miller is concerned with the order individuals or households partly create for themselves within a modern de-centered and relatively apolitical space, such as within the private home.

Within such an aesthetic, many different factors shape the meanings that people create. Their aesthetic is, therefore, multiply influenced or “overdetermined” (ibid, 8). There are the “vertical” influences that come from early childhood and through adolescence to adulthood. There is also a complementary “horizontal” dimension. This creates Bourdieusian homologies or the logic between different areas of practice. In other words, ways of dealing with one aspect of life may be consistent with ways of dealing with other totally unrelated aspects. Similar meanings order and explain different practices. As Miller writes, “At any given point of time the aesthetic is distributed through a series of relationships to different material genres or aspects of one life” (ibid 15).

An aesthetic merges vertical and horizontal dimensions of order. In the context of this study, the norms and meanings created through family, village and agricultural life may influence market vendors’ relationships to money, police and public space while current economic demands and difficulties may shift these relationships or reproduce them in new ways. These influences are the basis for vendors’ aesthetic authority.
Miller’s focus on the household and private sphere is a critique of the typical sociological categories of society, community and individual. Nonetheless, key ideas can be returned to the study of public spheres, religious and family networks, and associational groups. In other words, unrelated vendors can behave like family members. CEPEP workers who, in their head, constantly shuffle and add to the list of party activists they can turn to for help behave much like a man constantly reorganising his email as he affirms his place in his world or a woman who collects and moves her furniture around to feel she has some means of controlling her life.

Desire for and practice of relationships mark those experiences, values, people and things that are considered inalienable. This is because notwithstanding their relations to wider social norms up to and including the state, much of their emotional and personal concerns are centered on a few primary relationships, most especially those people they love. It is in the connection between these close relationships and the wider public sphere that women and men make both conscious and unconscious decisions about what really matters to them, and what they feel makes sense. They highlight the ways they order their lives. All these create an aesthetic that women and men use to legitimate what they do in the present. From this perspective, *aesthetic authority*, therefore, underlies the relationship between law and lore.

5.3 Legitimizing Practice

This discussion highlights a range of approaches that can be useful for interrogating legitimate authority and which also help attach people to various levels of social engagement. I draw on them as I explore the views of state officials, and what they suggest about how lore and law are negotiated along gradations of power.
At successive bureaucratic stages, *everybody have to eat* provides a source of traditional authority that is taken into account by representatives of *law* despite their legislative power. For example, past and present Mayors I interviewed felt that vendors should be prevented from selling on the street and should be moved by police if they do. They blamed vendors for creating confusion in the flow of people and traffic. Women and men, who would prefer uncongested sidewalks, and storeowners, who face competition from streetside vending, are cast as “taxpayers” whose needs the state should answer to.

However, Mayors generally empathise with vendors whose livelihood is in marketing as they realize it involves hard work and long hours. A past (NAR) Deputy Mayor (1986 to 1989) blamed the state for not sustaining the “proper and sustainable policing” needed to curb roadside vending. He admitted to knowing of police who take “bribes” from vendors and that some vendors feel obligated to give to police or feel that there is then less chance of them being taken to court and their goods seized. Yet, he understood that vendors saw themselves as using what he called “survival strategies” to “make a dollar”.

Figure 34: Patrolling the Packing Up
The (PNM) Mayor (2003 to 2006) reiterated a common perception of market vendors as being secretly well off and said, “Many of these people are quite successful because they do not pay rents and they do not pay business taxes. They are pretty wealthy”. To the vendors’ argument that unless they sell their extra or perishable goods outside of the market, they will waste, he responded, “If they conduct themselves appropriately and people do need the goods, they will go inside. But if you want a quick fix and know somebody will be outside, you can go about breaking the law, causing traffic to backup, it’s the mentality we have adopted and the lawlessness the society is showing”.

He felt that these people are “freeloaders” who want to be “in front of the rates and taxes that keep the city alive”. He argued that the business community even came to him to privately complain about their storefronts and pavements being blocked, and the illegal competition. Generally, the past and present members of the state, including Mayors and police, view High Street and Mucurapo Street vending as the same. The Mayor also blamed a lack of constant police vigilance. This suggests that what is wanted at the top is not necessarily what guides state actors’ actions at lower levels. However, it seems that inconsistent responses start at the very top where political will may today decide to eradicate street vending and tomorrow turn a blind eye.

At lower levels, police do not form a homogenous group. It is the City Police, operating under the City Corporation and as part of Local Government administration, who regulate vending around San Fernando. Therefore, vendors have a different relationship with them than with officers who are part of the San Fernando based-branch of the national police force. Vendors will also continue to sell if “Traffic Police” from the Central Police force are walking along Mucurapo Street on the lookout for cars to ticket. It is the City Police jeep turning from High Street onto Mucurapo Street that ruffles vendors settled on the road. There is clearly no homogenous view of policing or a state, but rather one that appreciates gradations and varieties of state authority and responsibility. In fact, the City

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8 Lloyd-Evans and Potter (2002, 108) state that government regulation is not as stringent in areas where traders provide a much needed service to local residents, for example, along the Eastern Main Road. Enforcement is stricter near or in areas of high-income housing and more lenient in lower-middle income housing or rural areas.
Police report that the Central Police tend to informally delegate issues of roadside and pavement vending to City Police jurisdiction. They strongly disagreed with this informal division of authority and felt that the Central Police should at least also enforce the national legislation.

Quite apart from the institutional divisions of the police, there are the personal relationships that may or may not develop between individual police who regularly have responsibility for the area and those they are responsible for dealing with. I showed this in Chapter 4. The interaction between people and state is not always impersonal nor without relationship. On both sides, factors such as ability to make jokes or appear hostile can be decisive.

In addition to legal regulations, police highlight 'moral' concerns related to hygiene, safety and security as reasons to discontinue vending. Their empathy is limited by their perception that the "market is real profit" and vendors are not simply "making a dollar". In these eyes of the law, vendors should not be on the road. Yet, to some extent, police empathise with vendors' attempts to earn a livelihood and they recognize that there is a demand for roadside sales. Disempowered by the rules regarding public space, vendors bargain, 'sweet-talk', bribe and keep up pretence in the hope that police will recognise their obedience in the face of the law and ignore their disobedience when they think no one sees. Yet, everyone knows.

Police, therefore, are also involved in bargaining, cajoling and a somewhat scripted pretence. This is one of the reasons why, despite both police and politicians' championing of legal authority, their practices and statements suggest that they accommodate instances and degrees of illegal vending. As Lloyd-Evans and Potter (2002, 108) conclude, "Within Trinidad, levels of police regulation over the informal sector reflect popular and political opinion".

In describing their interaction with vendors, the police began by saying that they try to educate them by telling them that it is against the Municipal Corporations Act to sell on
the road. They advise them to get a stall from the Market Clerk. However, most vendors already have stalls. The key reason for selling on the road is to get rid of perishable goods, to make profit or at least make up the cost of the goods and to be where the customers come looking for deals - to meet a demand - in the afternoon. Reliance on rules can only hurt vendors' economic opportunities.

Market vendors are clearly subordinate in their relationship with the police and politicians. Their way of negotiating selling on the road - times they sell, moving when they see police, not directly challenging police, telling them to give them a chance, explaining the need to sell out perishables - suggests that they recognize their overall lesser power in the relationship. In fact, attempts to negotiate with police through talking, moving only for the moment, delaying moving and bribing, treat police as vendors and encourage them to see the vendors as their own police. This is the chameleon effect of making and maintaining relationships around what matters.

Interestingly, because police know vendors through village relations or years on the job, their informal ties with roadside sellers may make it seem morally alright to accept gifts of produce or to have a drink with vendors who are friends. I was wary about asking the police about bribery. On the one hand, vendors highlighted its significance. On the other hand, asking the police about vendors' claims could have made vendors' lives more difficult if the police responded by punishing them with stricter enforcement of the law. Or, they could now refuse to take bribes (thereby cutting an informal point of negotiation) and make greater efforts to protect their reputation.

The police denied knowing any police officers who take bribes, but said they had heard that rumour as well. However, they also said that if off duty, un-uniformed police accept gifts from vendors, it is okay. One long standing member of the City Police said that many vendors are his friends and their gifts, as long as they are not money, should not be seen as bribes. One policeman seemed shocked that any would take food, drink, produce or money from vendors. However, he said that police officers often receive gifts from vendors they know, from many years in the force or from their villages outside of the
city, when they are out of uniform. He felt that was okay. There is without a doubt no
clear line between those on different sides of the law. While there appears to be obvious
hierarchy, those officially empowered to enforce the law clearly practice an idea of
reasonable authority.

Shared legalities explain why vendors are even able to negotiate with police, why they
are patronized by other citizens, and why even politicians are aware of depriving them of
their “dollar”. Vendors see police as vendors – as people just doing the job they have to.
Conversely, police see vendors like police – as if there are reasonable grounds for what
they are doing, as long as they don’t attempt to advantage them, the law and public space.
Having contacts with persons in authority doesn’t really help one vendor over another
when all have to move from their illegal selling spots. Vendors, nonetheless, attempt to
establish personal relations with police overall.

*Everybody have to eat* highlights women and men’s attempts to personalize the state and
to negotiate a relationship basically determined by law, force and fear. This disposition
enables vendors, politicians and police to legitimize a variety of kinds of power. On the
roadside, the spectrum of forms of power at play includes hustling, legislation, pretence,
bribes, conversation and friendship.

Like vendors, both police and politicians espouse outward obedience to state authority.
None of these groups challenge the entire legitimacy of law. Yet, they also operate
according to another set of values, priorities and perspectives regarding the public space
of the street. Like vendors, they are selective and strategic about declaring these. They all
operate within a range of notions regarding authority. Here, though perhaps not
elsewhere, illegality is considered reasonable and legitimate by vendors and state officials
to different degrees. This public politics is in formal spaces and normative practices. As
David Held points out, state power comprises the intentions and actions of those at
different tiers of government within the “parameters set by the institutionalized context of
state-society relations” (1989, 74). Bureaucracies are part of a state deeply interconnected
with civil society (ibid, 49) and modern negotiations of might and right.
The authority behind terms, such as reasonable or commonsense, explains how law may be interpreted, practiced or ignored by local government officials and police. Contestations over public space may be a class issue, read in moral terms and seen as resistance against an impoverishing economic system. They may also be seen as shifting stances regarding the legitimate use of public space because of the relationship between law and lore.

Holistically seen, law operates through domination, taken-for-granted habits and self-regulation across overlapping formal and informal arenas. Formal practices, processes and sources of authority can be appropriated to enforce, rather than overrule, informal ones. This does not negate ways that they may legitimize particular ideologies and asymmetrical power relations. Rather, formal authorities can similarly appropriate informal norms to layer their power. In translating each into the language or garb of the other, however, new possibilities for affiliation, alignment and action may be created (Galanter 1989). In this way, the “decentred”9 (Vincent 1994) exercise of law creates different meanings and unorthodox outcomes.

As I continue to show in the following pages, neither lore nor law is hegemonic. Hegemony refers to “power that “naturalizes” a social order, an institution, or even an everyday practice so that “how things are” seems inevitable” (Hirsch and Lazarus-Black 1994, 7). It limits what is openly and collectively contested. In Jean and John Comaroff’s (1991, 24-28) conceptualization, it is one end of a continuum while ideology is the other10. Ideology is contested, hegemony operates almost unseen. Both are continually

9 It is not simply that practices legitimizing authority are decentred, it is also that there may be many invoked rules rather than simply “an exclusive, systematic and unified hierarchical ordering of normative propositions” (Griffiths 1986, 3). The exercise of formal administration is marked by internal diversity, multiple directions, and struggles and competition among parts for authority. Among those with and without formal power, there is also choice-making, and discretionary, arbitrary and manipulative actions (Moore 1978, 3). Diverse and contradictory ideas of justice, and reliance on different sources of authority all contribute to this plurality. In other words, rules alone do not rule.

10 Comaroff and Comaroff (1991, 30) define hegemony as “a product of the dialectic whereby the content of dominant ideologies is distilled into the shared forms that seem to have such historical longevity as to be above history….they do not appear to have any ideological content. They belong to the domain of fact, not value. They are just there ineffably. People are conscious of ideology, but not of hegemony. Ideology refers to a worldview or system of beliefs and values that underlie the practices of a society, class or group, its place in a hierarchy of power and knowledge, and its relation with other societies, classes or groups.
negotiated and transformed by people conscious of dominant ideologies’ contradictions and alternatives. Law simply does not have enough popular legitimacy to be taken for granted or seen as inevitable. Nonetheless, it has compelling ideological, material and coercive power, and is considered one valid source of authority among others.

5.3.2 In the Name of Lore: Assertion of Law by Local Government Officials

As I show in the next two sections, love for mas works much like contacts. Officials also use the language of legitimate governmental regulation while simultaneously resorting to culture to justify their control. Party activists attempt to blend the language of law and lore so that it is difficult to tell one from the other, or even to tell the difference between social and legal politics. In another twist, Carnival Committee members attempt to give law two meanings so that it stands for both lore and law, and justifies state domination on both terms. Love for mas is contentiously invoked in its leadership disputes with bandleaders for this reason. Government officials, in this instance, brandish their formal
authority while attempting to wield the meanings that they give to love for mas. However, interestingly, the result is the operation of a variety of forms of power, and clear exercise of authority, with only contingent moments of legitimacy.

Generally, the San Fernando Carnival Committee (SCC) sees itself as balancing the interests of business people, mas makers and players, steelbands, performers, taxpayers and other state branches such as the police. Their overall mandate is derived from the National Carnival Commission. The composition of the committee primarily reflects those linked to the party in power. Committee members are elected and nominated City Corporation Councillors who together comprise local government. Generally, these are middle-strata experienced political activists who may also be friendly with market vendors, play mas, buy fish on the Wharf, worship at the masjid or have CEPEP contracts.

Although there was no mission statement, a Carnival development plan produced by past ASJA schools Principal, Fyze Hydal, guided the Carnival Development Committee’s (CDC) work under the NAR. The then government felt that focus should be, not simply on facilitation, but on developing Carnival as a sustainable industry. Knolly Huggins, a committee member from 1978-1984, saw the committee’s role as providing a forum for competitions, providing judges, seeking business sponsorship and “making the Carnival better”. Huggins didn’t think that the CDC was able to really “improve” Carnival, but didn’t feel this was the fault of the community or committee. Like the present SCC, they used a language of loyalty and localized patriotism to keep people playing mas in San Fernando.

Bandleaders (and others such as steelbands) have never had representation on the committee. They are included through consultations held before and after Carnival. Usually, they only attend meetings to which they are invited. When bandleaders do not feel consulted, it is particularly offending because they see themselves as experienced ‘experts’. Their exclusion is often blamed on bandleaders’ conflicts and inability to

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11 The CDC was also derisively known as the “Carnival Destruction Committee” (Mason 1998, 123).
decide on a representative. Competition mitigates against them consistently working together. However, as Knolly Huggins explained, members often feel that the committee shouldn’t be “dictated to by bandleaders”. When he was in the SCC, they “leaned backward” for the bandleaders. He felt this was wrong because “mas is for San Fernando not just the bandleaders’ interests”.

Huggins felt that bandleaders would stymie the process and undermine the decisions of the SCC if they were included. This suggests that the two groups have different priorities. However, nonetheless, past member Vernon Leotaud felt that the CDC had a good relationship with bandleaders. They were also willing to cooperate. Torrence Mohammed (a choreographer, PNM City Councillor for sixteen years and Deputy Mayor from 1999-2003) also remembered “good relations” between the SCC and bandleaders. Yet, it is notable that judging, prizes and regulations regarding the route and competitions have remained perennial sources of acrimony between bandleaders and the state (see also Mason 1998, 93). It is striking that those involved in Carnival in San Fernando have never been able to establish a permanent route.

Ultimately, Huggins felt that the Committee “runs” Carnival in San Fernando and compared it to the father being head of the home. He didn’t see this father figure as having to dictate all that should happen and said sometimes he can be wrong. Like a father figure, he pointed out that the bandleaders had to trust the SCC for the relationship to work. He said that they assessed the success of the Carnival Committee depending on how the bandleaders responded, but there was never a defined basis for evaluation. Allan Sammy, a past NAR Deputy Mayor, described the state as having a genuine interest in Carnival, but also in being able to claim “paternity” of Carnival because it can be seen as “ours”. He said that explains why so much “political money” is spent propping up Carnival, steelband and calypso “as if national culture is still alive”.

The National Carnival Commission and its ‘regional’ extensions were established to organise and promote Carnival for local and foreign consumption (Rogers 1990). Its legislated role in Carnival privileged “official” cultural values and “moralistic regulatory
The act not only constitutes a watershed in the historically troubled relations between popular culture and the post-independence nation-state, but also provides government with a hegemonic role as the primary facilitator of the country’s most important public site, event, and display of national culture. For the first time in the country’s history, both the regulation and the official promotion of carnival have been legally assigned to one body.

The present San Fernando Carnival Committee regulates people and traffic using the competition judging points. These enable them to force mas bands to travel particular routes around the city. Politicians can therefore ensure that various constituency areas are equitably included. Its members feel they have a clear mandate to decide how Carnival culture will play out. This means that they sometimes dismissed bandleaders’ own ideas as self-interested, uninformed or narrow. Since the 1950s, government endorsement and sponsorship was tied to the authority of rules and regulations. Sponsorship enabled the state to control all the major competitions and staged events, and universalised an “official” format for Carnival. This reflected a concern with bureaucratic efficiency, rules, control of venues and police security.

The (2003-2006) Mayor described state regulation of mas in San Fernando as making decisions about the route, attempting to forestall bottlenecks which attract criminals along the route, paying a stipend to judges who otherwise act independently of the SCC, organising competitions and giving prizes. He described himself as a “facilitator” and added, “I make sure Carnival comes off top of the line”. He complained that not all the Councilors give full support and not all bring a vision to the table. Entering his second of three years in office, the Mayor described a need to counter declining numbers of masqueraders in San Fernando’s Carnival. He blamed decline in the standard of mas over time. As a result, many San Fernando people, including himself, played mas in Port of Spain. He said that in the past, there were no visionaries to bring back that loyalty and commitment to the city. He aimed to do this through Carnival, City Week and other activities. Indirectly claiming some responsibility, he asserted, “It was said that San
Fernando Carnival this year was biggest and brightest for many a year and you have to let people know that being a part of home means something”.

As Carnival is increasingly seen as a cultural industry, state discourse has also shifted to emphasise ‘development’ and ‘management’ and ‘facilitation’. Thus, the committee also feels it has to satisfy is the business community. Businesses will ask for a mas band or ‘pan side’ to be routed past their business, and in return offer prize money. Coffee Street businesses offered enough sponsorship for 2003 Carnival for the Mayor to tell bandleaders that the Coffee had to be included to accommodate the business people of San Fernando. Bars are major sources of profit for Carnival and committee members have themselves been accused of routing the parade past their own businesses. Bandleaders, therefore, not only negotiate with the state, but with elite business interests. Both dedicate their great resources to taking advantage of Carnival’s money-making potential. Allahar and Zavitz (2002, 139) have commented,

Not only are the profits for this seemingly nationalist agenda tied to capitalism, but the ideology of Carnival as a national festival symbolizing Trinidadian “unity” serves to mask and distract from greater class inequalities, not only within Carnival, but within the larger society. Therefore, when class is added to the analysis, Carnival is not simplistically an “African” event, based on African culture and traditions, but is an event that signifies and is connected to Trinidad as a nation with a capitalist economic structure.

In examining how the nation is being marketed, Green (2002, 283) has also argued that commodification of culture serves the interests of both “international culture industries and the hegemonic international order of nation-states”. This is what is at stake in struggles over this source of national pride.

Some past and present committee members argue that race or party politics do not influence mas judging because the SCC allows judges to act independently. Others describe favoritism, tokenism, nepotism and patronage regardless of the party in power. Both Torrence Mohammed and Allan Sammy admitted that there is a popular perception that when one party is in power, the bandleader associated with the party wins. Some
bandleaders also expressed this view. Although the committee is PNM controlled, the Convener disagreed that there is ethnic or party politics in Carnival governance. However, he added, “things are better when the PNM is controlling because PNM people are less corrupt and know carnival better”. Yet, he acknowledged that, “mas people don’t trust the Committee and think there is politics in it, no fair play or transparency”.

Sammy also suggested that politics plays a role in Carnival, and that while “the Coffee” was an important street for San Fernando Carnival, the Prime Minister’s constituency was also served by bands passing on that street. In fact, when a band is passing, the Prime Minister comes down to the front steps of the PNM San Fernando East constituency office and waves, hugs people and shakes others’ hands. It is a significant moment suggesting he is part of the people, supports mas in San Fernando, is a proud San Fernandian and recognizes that the people look forward to seeing him. As Eriksen (1992, 156) describes, “One cannot be recognized publicly as a true-true Trini unless one masters informal aspects of public life, even if one happens to be prime minister”.

While Huggins disagreed that political actors benefit from their control of the Carnival, he recognised that astute political actors, such as the Prime Minister, benefit from being seen by the bands on Carnival day. Sammy was not suggesting that political actors themselves benefit from control of the SCC. Rather, because a successful Carnival contributes to a Mayor’s status in the City, and in his or her political party, “it is easy for a politician to think that they caused Carnival to be a success” and to forget both the big bands and the small ones which highlight San Fernando people’s independent spirit and community participation.

SCC members consistently exert authority over final decisions. The relationship between them and mas makers is distinctly hierarchical. However, the Mayor did not agree and presented their relationship as one among equals. He said that the committee showed bandleaders respect by giving out prize money early and managing the Carnival differently. Lionel disagreed, “We communicate with them but, they don’t treat us as equals. At certain times, I feel we were equals with them and they understand us how we
used to speak to them. We used to speak to them in equal terms and really discuss Carnival, but right now these people are new and they have a problem speaking on that level with us”. Wayne Hanuman of the mas band Fireworks Promotion agreed that the Mayor and SCC “control Carnival in South”. He felt the Mayor and the SCC had made improvements through the increased number of events they organized, such as City Week. As well, despite some conflicts, he felt they consulted bandleaders.

Wendy Kalicharan, a bandleader from another camp, agreed with the Mayor’s route and felt judging in the city is fair. However, like other bandleaders, she wanted a representative on the committee. This is because she felt the committee “calls the shots and can pull the wool over our eyes because bandleaders are weak as a group”. However, she admitted that it would be hard to decide whom to send as the representative. When I asked about the committee’s relationship with bandleaders, she responded, “They see themselves as above us, certainly”. While bandleaders are willing to work with the state, they often resent the hierarchy imposed on the relationship. They are, therefore, very unruly when ready and concerned about subverting state control for their own priorities. As Lionel agreed, “The people is the Carnival. The people in Town Hall just administering, distributing, telling you what time to come out, but the people, the pan men, masqueraders, the vendors is the Carnival”.

Here, even if local government officials have legislated control, it is simply not good enough. Law must be asserted as if it is really legitimated by lore. This is different from the situation among party activists where law and lore both offer legitimate (though different) reasons for spending resources and meeting needs. It is also different from the approach of City Police. The Mayor and Councillors on the Carnival Committee must act as if love for mas is the basis for what they do. When handled well, bandleaders’ interpret this as a recognition of their leadership, expertise and importance. In essence, lore makes law seem reasonable. It forces officials to reproduce some minimally consultative relationship with bandleaders and, in essence, to de-centre the exercise of law. It presses spirit and culture rather than simply rationality and efficiency into bureaucratic practice.
Yet, these politicians get impatient and irritated because they feel legislation and their position on the Committee is enough to justify their hierarchical control. Also, frustratingly, love for mas stops conveying legitimacy once an official (or even regular person) who is not involved in producing mas or music for Carnival seeks to claim and over determine the artists’ domain. This only partially works for bandleaders because, often, Committee members proceed to make decisions whether or not popularly sanctioned. However, as long as prizes are offered, bandleaders appear willing to continue to negotiate a continuum of command. Like contacts, love for mas works downwards to make compliance a source of power.

These dispositions enable negotiation over leadership and its bases for authority. While police and higher-ranking political activists have clear forms of power over vendors and squatters, legislation, office and resources do not give the Carnival Committee such legitimacy. This shows another twist in the nexus of law, lore and legitimacy within state practice. In police’s relationship with vendors, law and lore infuse each other’s practice and meaning. Among the hierarchy of political activists, lore or contacts masquerades as law. However, in this instance, law can only be seen as legitimate when it manages to be camouflaged as lore and not appear as a stark expression of the state’s material, legal and coercive power to dominate Carnival. Here too, there is bargaining, cajoling, sweet talk, quarreling, legislation, empathy, cooperation and pretense.

This fluidity of informal and formal power and moral authority can be understood by paying attention to the “unspoken axioms, ideologies, and aesthetics” that underlie the idea of a just and reasonable political world (Comaroff 1994, xi). As John Comaroff describes, power is created by the “relative capacities - of human beings and habitual processes, of social institutions and cultural practices – to construct reality, to shape lived worlds, to give form to perceptions and conceptions, to beat out the polyrhythms of everyday life” (ibid, xii). Power relations cannot be understood simplistically as negotiations among statically positioned people. Rather, they “always entail multiple representations, multiple subjectivities, multiple realities” (ibid, x). This helps clear up why law is empowered to construct reality while being the ground where this is also
disabled and reconstructed. Some engage with its power by claiming it, by resorting to informality or illegalities, or by doing both.

For this reason, law cannot simply be seen as an instrument of ruling classes. Instead, formalized kinds of power are exercised differently at different tiers of authority -- including within lore. Their exercise shifts and sets the boundaries of what is possible\textsuperscript{12}. They produce (not just control) relationships and practices, and operate through disciplinary practices of all kinds. Therefore, an approach to legitimate authority that pulls together perspectives from both Foucault and Gramsci would go further than Weber's categories of consent to domination. It would include the nuanced ways that hegemony operates.

5.3.3 Playing Like Yuh Switch: Law and Lore Among Party Activists in Power

Figure 36: CEPEP Wuz Here

While police and local government officials champion the language of law while admitting to have to accommodate lore, party activists in positions of power show sophisticated discursive play with both kinds of authority. \textit{Everybody have to eat} also

\textsuperscript{12} This is how power is central to discourse. It sets "the parameters of what can be said, thought, challenged, struggled over, and achieved in a given historical moment" (Hirsch and Lazarus-Black 1994, 3).
works as a source of higher authority among officials at another tier in state power. At the same time, they wield the informal authority of contacts in a way that affirms the needs of some rather than all.

Depending on whether they are in or out of power, politicians will describe patronage as welfare and distribution of resources or as corruption. All those I interviewed agreed that welfare provision is important. Yet, all acknowledged the link between spending money and winning elections. Here, spending is both aimed at gaining voters and rewarding those already involved. The past UNC Member of Parliament for San Fernando complained that there was no difference between URP and CEPEP, that both were "wholesale patronage" and that the "government wants to control all the patronage". A past NAR Deputy Mayor agreed and criticized the lack of a development or training programmes within the URP. He added, "These programmes are not sustainable. They are premised on the idea that the state has money and they are geared to winning elections".

As journalist Tony Fraser (Trinidad Guardian, December 16, 2004, p29) reported of a march: "Hence the chants on the streets and the public squares, Lord Harris and Woodford on Tuesday last: "No CEPEP; no PNM government". Ryan notes massive electoral swings in nations like Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago because of incumbent parties' inability to sustain patronage. The ensuing decline in party loyalty, also described as "no work no vote" leads to greater possibilities for governments being voted out or what Selwyn Ryan calls a "coup de ballot" (1990, 12).

Some contractors define the programme as social welfare rather than patronage. This is because workers tend to be those who would find it difficult to get jobs, who are unemployed or whose trade cannot make ends meet. Others claim that CEPEP is not welfare because "we work for our daily bread". The foremen and boss evaluate workers on a fortnightly basis and, as one contractor said, look at "how hard they work, their sense of commitment, if they are called upon to attend CEPEP centre motivational seminars how interested they are". My observations suggest that the majority of workers
are not interested in CEPEP as anything other than waged and regular employment. Contractors are expected to encourage workers to “develop themselves” and workers are expected to develop into entrepreneurs. Some, therefore, call it “social intervention” rather than welfare.

Whether or not those involved describe the programme as welfare or social intervention, many I interviewed were unwilling to describe it as patronage. Only those in opposition called it corruption. One CEPEP contractor asserted, “Though it began around the time of elections and many contractors are PNM, it is not a patronage thing”. Another said, “We work for our daily bread and the salaries we get are not huge. We pay bills, VAT, NIS every 15th of the month13. We have to buy machines and gas and all of this is cost. We put out the money so there is no way that this is corruption”. Those opposing the programme argue that it doesn’t lead to micro-enterprise as it remains dependent on state resources and direction, and it doesn’t generate economic growth. Expectedly, they also criticise the administrative overlap between those in the ruling party and those in the programme.

It seems accepted that when a party takes power, the state becomes its instrument for governing all, and for looking after its own. Jobs are the most important way. As the MP explained, “I do things for the PNM so that five years down the road, I can put my head on a block that they will go to the polls and vote for the PNM”. It is accepted that those who helped the party get in power would get employment right up the line. At the same time, it suggests a notion of what is considered corrupt, unnecessary and excess. Contractors are embarrassed by stories of others openly making their workers form party groups, attend family days or buy gifts for the MP. One contractor noted that his own accounts were in place and he had taken another to his accountant so his could be too.

Contractors only reluctantly agreed that workers see their jobs in exchange for votes, and that these programmes were significant to the results of general and local government elections. They admit that the CEPEP and URP lists overlap with voting lists, but say that

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13 Value Added Tax, and National Insurance Scheme contributions for state pension.
voting lists are not used to decide who can be a worker. Contractors also give contradictory impressions. One argued that workers help for elections because they want the party to stay in power so that they could keep their job. He said, "Workers take it upon themselves to help on election day. It is not that we use workers for our events, but that they are keen themselves to work for the party." We agreed that it helps that workers know they wouldn't lose their job, as if they were taking the day off en masse to campaign for the other party. A female contractor similarly stated, "CEPEP workers involved in party groups will be involved in campaigning, but in their free time. The party group is the heart of the party. It is them who walk the road. Yes, party members are employed with me. It was in the PNM office my team was set up".

Not only the party, but individuals and their relationships with those who need them come to define government. From the Prime Minister to low ranking URP “foremen”, what gets dispensed is seen as a benefit or gift of having particular individuals in power. As the MP pointed out, "In a way, there is some patronage. Let’s say that there are five contractors and I chose them, you could say I am their patron. But then they can be seen as the patrons of sixty workers each and they don’t owe their loyalty to me, but to the contractor. So that contractor begins to wield a patronage if they want to. But it depends on the person and how they wield their power". In this way, leadership can cultivate obligations and hero-crowd relations using patronage. To quote Tony Fraser (Trinidad Guardian, December 16, 2004, p 29) again,

In one of the three elections between 2000 and 2001, this columnist witnessed a core of the black-shirted ETP workers in almost militarised fashion being marshalled by a government minister at a pre-election meeting in Arima. The parties, the PNM in particular and in the current dispensation, have ridden the tiger; they dare not dismount any time now. The result has been that the Manning Government has pumped billions of dollars into political welfare in the last three years.

While one contractor I interviewed claimed, "The middle class is back because of CEPEP and my workers have been offered a way of life by the PNM government", she still disagreed that workers see the job in exchange for votes. Taking a different tactic, the MP
also argued that CEPEP is not important to votes. She explained, “Let’s say we have five contractors in San Fernando West with sixty workers each. What is sixty votes? You can find ways of employing them. You can close CEPEP and find other jobs for these people in the morning. It is not significant for votes”. Yet, in a ‘marginal’ constituency like San Fernando West, where the last election was won by a one percent margin, every vote appears to count. However, the Programme Manager for CEPEP presented an opposite view saying, “Yes, this programme is important to votes, but that is how part of how politics is”. As the Local Government Councillor pointed out, “CEPEP and URP is really to get something for people to do. It is not primarily to trade jobs for votes. But, of course, if you belong to a party, you will have a better chance so both person and party benefit”.

Those in the Opposition and other past politicians that I interviewed agreed that programmes such as CEPEP and URP are related to votes. As a past NAR Mayor noted, “People feel obligated to the government who gave them a job. The MP is the patron”. Yet, politicians are aware that even providing jobs may not guarantee voters’ support. As the female URP “foreman” observed, “Yes, is important to votes. That is the whole thing about it, but many people get jobs and don’t vote at all”. Politicians know that winning requires more than election canvassing. Thus, one contractor pointed out, “To win an election you must satisfy your people in the five years you are reigning. You need to win an election while in office. You need to make sure people are happy. You can’t have money in a treasury and don’t have CEPEP. Right now we need CEPEP two, three and four”.

In interviews, contractors at times justified the political party’s role in administering CEPEP. At other times, they claimed a neutral process. Officially, applications for contractors were in newspapers. People were interviewed and then short-listed. All those applying had to have established their own company. All the CEPEP contractors, also publicly called “entrepreneurs”, were adamant that the process was open and anyone could apply. None thought that there was any reason for criticizing the number of middle-ranking party activists who were finally awarded contracts. It is if ‘the process’ implies
neutrality and itself justified the ways that parties infiltrate the state. One contractor argued,

Because you are on the Constituency Executive you can't have a contract? What makes us so different? It was in the papers, I was interviewed and selected. I went through the process. I don't think it is political patronage because I am qualified. I'm looking for some of others who are high profile around the government and have business. They get government contracts. Is that political patronage? No, they bid and there is a paper trail. There is transparency in everything. So what if someone from the PNM gets a contract, what is so damning about that? They upset they didn't have the idea, so because its PNM idea they say is reward for political patronage, because your reward would have gone to three rich people and not filter down to smaller man. Mr. Manning [the Prime Minister] is making sure even if it is patronage, it is filtering down. The small man will get something.

The Programme Manager explained that PNM activists ended up being contractors because “you can't get away from the politics”. One contractor argued that they had to look for people they could trust to get the programme started and successful and that it made sense to “quicker take a chance with PNM people”. He felt that, later on, when the programme is running and “can't be stopped”, others would become more involved. However, he noted that, “you would want people of your persuasion in the beginning to ensure that the programme looked good”.

This suggests how political parties use the state to mediate relations with party activists and voters. The contractor also said that the overwhelming involvement of party faithful is not about repaying them, but about not neglecting “those who went out of their way to keep the party in power”. As he pointed out, “trying to win more friends can lead to ignoring those there all the time, your core support who is doing work and getting nothing”. Awarding party faithful CEPEP contracts is also presented as not taking “your people” for granted while attending to the government’s responsibility to the country.

The Mayor similarly asserted that, “every government helps the people who help them”. Pointing fingers at the “previous government”, he concluded,
If the PNM does it now, that is not a problem as far as I see it. What is good for one has to be good for the other. The UNC gave money to their party people, but they did it differently because the people did not work for their money. To help those who help you is not a problem. You have to understand. It is prudent to put a PNM activist who shares the vision and consistency of what the party is trying to achieve. Civil disobedience. They can come in there and spoil the thing. And that is what is happening in Trinidad and Tobago today. The violence that is coming out is because of civil disobedience. If you have political leaders speaking ill and showing disrespect to your Prime Minister, others will emulate them. So, you can't put people there who will not perform to make the thing not look good. I would hate to think the PNM put me here and I am a UNC activist.

I said I believed, perhaps naively, that millions in taxpayers' money should go to a programme open to all. He retorted, "I would say more than kind of naive".

The (2002 to 2007) Member of Parliament was even more specific when I pointed out that while the programme may benefit the country, it does so overwhelmingly through benefits to the party. She described how MPs exercise influence in the selection of contractors. Openly, she talked about choosing to recommend traditional PNM activists who "put the party in power and have been involved year after year, canvassing and walking the road for elections, and not getting anything from the PNM". She justified her choices by concluding that, "I have decided to say thank you and if that is patronage and that is payoff, I have no problem with that. Here, I am an MP, not a Minister".

The MP, in fact, recommended five of the eight contractors in the constituency. Four of the eight are part of the PNM Constituency Executive, one is a current PNM Local Government Councillor, two are past PNM Local Government Councillors, and the others are involved with the party as activists. Four are female, four are male and one male is an Indo-Trinidadian. One of the past Local Government Councillors has no formal position, but acts as the Field Officer for the San Fernando West Constituency Executive. He often gets updates from the URP foreman and acts as an informal point of information exchange between the MP and those closer to the ground. The MP continued, "I believed in saying thank you, these people have been working for years for the PNM,"
some have also been Councilors and CEPEP empowers them to do things they couldn’t do as Councillors who found it hard to service their areas”.

The politician who chooses contractors can help determine work sites to be cleaned, and they cooperate for the good of the constituency and the party’s reputation. The MP meets with the regional coordinator of the URP, and checks with the Mayor and the City Corporation. She then makes recommendations based on what she perceives is going on in the constituency and where needs to be serviced. In this way, the political leadership is involved in decisions regarding CEPEP and URP.

There is a close relationship among the MP, those involved in the URP and CEPEP contractors. Activists with largely paternalistic and populist styles of leadership therefore remain focal points for party loyalties and popular relations with the state. However, more than this, bureaucracy itself is personalized. As Bishnu Ragoonath (2000) observed, this keeps local government “at the realm or mode of delegation”.

It is common for MPs to able to recommend constituents for short-term welfare if they are in need. Susan Craig (1974), for example, describes past Members of Parliament and Local Government Councillors mobilizing political support in exchange for limited resources or promises to maximize the economic self-interest of the poor. In contemporary practice, the URP foreman for Springvale gives the names she has selected for the next URP roster to the CEPEP contractor who is also the Field Officer. He takes the names to the Constituency Office and then makes recommendations to the URP office. The foreman felt that the most important link in the chain of command was the

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14 The foreman said she was asked to take this job as she had acted in this capacity before. The same CEPEP contractor asked her. She authorizes the names that get included on the URP list every fortnight. She said that the names have to be on a voting list, are first looked at by the Constituency Office, must be from persons living in the area and sometimes includes names recommended by the Local Government Councillor. It is important for the foreman to be known both up the hierarchy and below as she or he needs to be seen as someone who knows people in the area and can provide recommendations. It also therefore helps workers if the foreman knows them and they can approach her or him about being put on the next URP list. The foreman collects names by walking around and asking if anyone wants their name put on the list. Alternatively, people will approach her. She and the Constituency Office have the power to stop people from getting too many ‘10 days’ or getting them consecutively, and can choose to replace someone on the list with someone who has never had a chance. It is therefore useful to know and be friends with the
Constituency Office and that “everything passes through there”. She described this to me openly and appeared to accept this as it is, and to think it reasonable and legitimate.

Across levels of power, party activists and politicians claim that CEPEP and URP are about welfare, social intervention and entrepreneurship. This is the language of everybody needing to eat. Yet, contacts expresses alternative justifications. Jobs are needed, but so are votes and party supporters. Having the resources to create relationships between party leaders and those in economic need is key. Patronage is, therefore, more about the authority of reciprocal relations than it is about simply servicing need. It is who hustles that really eats.

These various justifications flow through each other and through the practice of government creating largely informal reasons for what appear as formally legitimate practices. Workers living on the Railway Line similarly maneuver through informal requests for help and promises of reciprocity, in addition to engaging in the formalities of voting. Informality fluidly navigates and utilizes modes of formal power just as institutionalized individuals and groups rely on the power of contacts. This disposition also highlights attempts to personalize the state, and to legitimize overlapping informal and formal powers.

Contacts adds a personal twist to everybody have to eat. It legitimizes patronage because it enables parties to be partial to their voters and to disguise partiality with talk about legitimately responding to a general need. Fancy discursive footwork enables higher-ranking party activists to create worker-voters while denying this relationship. Like police, party activists are selective about declaring their participation in lore and their view that political patronage is perfectly reasonable. However, squatters, workers, contractors, government officials and party activists at all tiers of power accept it to some degree depending on whether they can or cannot access this form of power. This is how location within or outside of the state is significant.

foreman. Those who feel they haven’t been given enough jobs or complain of favorites being chosen are the very aware of this.
Even more than vendors, these women and men can be found busily “hustling a dollar” with bribery, cajoling, sweet talk, pretence and attractive deals, as if elected leadership and bureaucracy have little substantive authority at all. There is no established hierarchy of legitimacy, and the range of possible registers, including need, family, friendship, promises, office and profit, are certainly not wholly dominated by law. Everyone, from the lowest-ranking URP foreman and party activist to the MP and even CEPEP Programme Manager and Prime Minister, is combining registers of authority. Contacts expresses this struggle over the practice and meanings of law and, ultimately, legitimacy.

Preoccupation with making ends meet and fulfillment of one’s needs “is both a product of, and an adaptive mechanism to, contemporary society” (Held 1989, 92). Women and men “have to go to work, get ahead, and make the best use of the opportunities with which they are presented; otherwise, they find themselves poor and marginal to the whole order” (ibid 105). This may create obedience, compliance and even consent for varying reasons, but not necessarily normative agreement or legitimacy. It does not mean rules and laws are considered correct or worthy (ibid, 102). Neither does it imply revolutionary responses.

Yet, people do not simply lose their politics because there is decreasing conflict, increasing consumerism, powerful ideological forces or even extensive national pride. Relations to production and reproduction, ability to access and influence government, degrees of trust and disillusionment all continue to inform people’s pragmatism regarding legitimacy. Held suggests giving weight to “the autonomy of working-class traditions”\textsuperscript{15}, the importance of gradations of governmental power to ordinary people’s sense that their needs are fulfilled\textsuperscript{16}, and widespread conditional and instrumental consent\textsuperscript{17}, (ibid 127).

\textsuperscript{15} These “tend to emphasize the virtues of collectivism and community over and against ‘bourgeois individualism’ (‘getting ahead’) and the naked pursuit of private property (‘the drive to accumulate’)” (ibid 127).

\textsuperscript{16} On this point Held notes that, “while local councillors are not thought of as very significant in the determination of political outcomes, they are conceived – in relative terms – as more ‘reliable’ to look after people’s interests...more aware of ‘ordinary people’s needs’ – even if it is admitted that such representatives are powerless to do anything about them” (ibid, 130).

\textsuperscript{17} He writes, “people’s relationships to party, government and the state are becoming ever more instrumental; that is, consent or loyalty is tied increasingly to the promise and actuality of better political and economic performance” (ibid, 128).
He contends, "The possibilities for antagonistic stances against the state – prefigured or anticipated in people’s distrust of politicians, respect for the local and common sense of ordinary people, rejection of ‘experts’ – are there, as indeed are germs of a variety of other kinds of political movement which seek to reassert the authority of ‘the state’"\(^{18}\) (ibid, 132).

Against Weber, evidence from the market, mas camp and Railway Line in San Fernando suggest that administration based on formal agreement is not historically inevitable. Officials’ comments, discussed below, retain a mix of technocratic thinking and human values associated with fairness and human happiness\(^{19}\). In this instance, they are influenced by the habitus emerging from informal social life. Not just families, communities or religious groups articulate these. Values associated with efficiency, profit and formal rules therefore combine with those associated with more traditional moral authority\(^{20}\) (Elwell 1999). The case studies here suggest that mixed bases for legitimate authority operate along gradations of power. They, therefore, bridge and blend its informal and formal expressions. This creates a space for understanding the “actual relationships that govern political interactions of power, influence, and authority within the political community” (Stone 1986, 48).

\(^{18}\) This is part of a larger quote outlining how “…the cynicism, skepticism, detachment of many people today fails sometimes to be offset by sufficient comforts and benefits as the economy and successive governments run into severe difficulties. The often expressed distrust has been, and can be, translated into a range of actions. The possibilities for antagonistic stances against the state – prefigured or anticipated in people’s distrust of politicians, respect for the local and common sense of ordinary people, rejection of ‘experts’ – are there, as indeed are germs of a variety of other kinds of political movement which seek to reassert the authority of ‘the state’. That there should be antagonism and conflict is not surprising: conditional consent or pragmatic acceptance of the status quo is potentially unstable precisely because it is conditional or pragmatic” (ibid, 132).

\(^{19}\) As Sally Falk Moore writes, in this way “institutions themselves are seen as sorting out their own political place and powers, and having an impact on the shape of the polity, and its “culture” (2005, 177). Her concept of culture here is not innocent, but defines it as “a consciously mobilized collective identity in the midst of a political struggle, and it arises in relation to constitutions, collective inequalities, insiders and outsiders, and other aspects of national and ethnic politics” (Sally Falk Moore. 2001. Certainties Undone: Fifty Turbulent Years of Legal Anthropology, 1949-1999, Huxley Memorial Lecture, Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute 7, 1: 95-116, p96).

\(^{20}\) Ironically, Weber contrasted technocratic thinking or formal rationalization with substantive rationality or thinking anchored in considerations of the whole. This second kind could actually mitigate against the irrationality of rationalization or bureaucratic decisions that did not actually benefit society, workers, women, etc (Elwell 1999)
5.4 Conclusion

Building on the last chapter, this one shows how state actors such as City Police, Local Government Councilors, successive Mayors and party activists rely precisely on the interlocking authority of law and lore. This suggests that the 'state' is not far different from vendors, mas makers, CEPEP and URP workers, and citizens generally in the ways it participates in public life. Clearly, bureaucracies do not simply enable domination. Rather, they appear enmeshed in a range of divisions and struggles.

Differences in police and Mayors' practices show how formal and informal authority play out in diverse ways along tiers of power, sometimes creating contradictory responses. The intentions, values and actions of individual police or politicians at different tiers connect bureaucratic power to ordinary women and men's lives in personal, pragmatic, empathetic and reciprocal ways. State authority is clearly about more than force, rules and domination because of the ways that legitimacy is withheld, accessed, mimicked and navigated. Even within the state, a politics of authority means mixing, switching and twisting social politics and legal politics.

The ambivalence, instrumental compliance and pragmatic acquiescence to rules, discussed by David Held, seems surprisingly appropriate to officials' practices. They clearly maneuver an array of truths, ideologies and aesthetics. Not only is the state far from homogenous, officials' views and actions also exemplify multiplicity. These officials both claim law and resort to informality and, even, illegality for a wide and varied range of reasons. This complements how vendors, mas makers and squatters reproduce (the legitimacy) of law in their own ways. Rather than simply repressing, power does produce particular alignments and actions through shifting combinations of law, lore and aesthetic.

Law sets up abstract rules, but in practice always has to be manifested in actual contexts and practices. These are already infused with lore, social politics and notions of reasonableness. This may mean that law becomes reasonably contained on roadsides by
vendors, police, customers and passersby, managed in terms of fair exchange between squatters, party activists and elected politicians, and navigated across the competing demands of commercial sponsors, the aesthetic demands of successful mas and moral obligations of nationalism in Carnival Committee meetings.

In each instance, law is expected to work in ways that coincide with and express these normative approaches to behaviour. The practice and meaning of legislation and office only emerge when lore determines how different forms of power are actually manifested in specific situations and what kinds are dominant. The demands of legitimacy, however, continue to validate law. It remains its own reason for power when women or men seek to justify their stances by drawing on abstract law, and not just lore or the habitus emerging from reasonable mix of the two.

At another level, there are understandings reached within the personal relationships formed amongst women and men involved in this array of interactions. Character, personal style, and “how you talk to people” all influence how individuals and groups make sense and judge what police, politicians and bureaucrats say, do and mean. This is because these vendors, mas makers and government workers’ personal experiences, teachings from their parents, grudges and fantasies give strong credence to one form of legitimation or can delegitimize a claimed authority. This is how neighbourhoods and cities are privatized.

Relationships, especially those of love and care, influence women and men’s connection with the officials, ‘the state’, political ideals and authority itself. They relate to them as they might their CD collection, home, pets or shopping. An individual might seek out subordination to the state for reasons that have to do with her relationship to her parents. Or, she might resist the state for reasons that connect to her marriage.

While gradations of power within state bureaucracies are important, so too are the kinds of relationships worked out amongst those meeting at different tiers. The necessity, skill and ideal of making and maintaining relationships around what matters suggest that the
practice and meanings of authority are hardly abstract. Like reasonableness, relationships legitimize action. Moving further down from institutional gradations and inter-personal connections to the individual level, aesthetic authority involves the virtuosity of acknowledging law, knowing when is appropriate to ignore it and having the personal character to do it with style and, therefore, legitimacy (Miller 1993).

In an overall normative approach, aesthetic authority moves chameleon-like across different registers of power. Its legitimacy emerges through practice, relationships, leadership and efficacy, as well as abstract forms and rules. Its significance here is in the "ways of operating", "styles of action" and tactics (Giard 1998, xxiii) it enables officials to interject into state practice. This is how dispositions underlie politics as it occurs within the individuals, families, friendships, associations, neighbourhoods, workplaces and bureaucracies that comprise public life. Just as vendors, voters and mas makers call on different sources of authority by turning to police if they need to, or refusing to vote because they think it makes no difference or asking the San Fernando Carnival Committee for greater prize monies, so too officials maneuver relationship through the kinds of authority they wield at different tiers of power. Police may mix lore with law, political activists may masquerade lore as law, and Carnival Committee members may masquerade law as lore. These are the actual manifestations of law in practice.

Both practices in informal life and officials’ view also emphasise the importance of forging and maintaining relationships. Together these cases point to the ways that contradictions as well as ideals of order and balance are worked out. The ways lore and law are negotiated with regard to use of roadsides resonates with negotiations over, for example, jobs, votes and prizes. The logic between divergent areas of practice forms an overall, totalizing order. This makes unconnected things make sense in relation to each other. It creates an aesthetic that legitimises what people do.
It is our duty as Muslim women to have a say in the politics of our country and the politics that shape our lives as women. Politics is not only the realm of men, as many men want to propagate. On the contrary, it has been made our primary concern throughout Islamic history since 1500 years ago, when the women gave the Prophet their vote (Baiya) personally. We were equally addressed, and were equal partners in matters of the state.¹

6.1 Introduction

One October morning, Ruqaya, a motherly-looking woman wearing a hijab met me and drove us to the site of the ASJA election. I had seen her petition against women’s disenfranchisement circulating the masjid. A short paragraph at the top of the page had asserted that the ASJA constitution did not bar women from voting and sought signatures of support below. I could not have gone alone to the election. Comfortably, neither could she. I was wearing loose jeans and a long sleeve shirt when Ruqaya picked me up and, as

¹ These are the words of a woman from an Egyptian Islamic women’s group. She went on to add, “This is, however, not the notion most Muslim men carry. Somewhere, the perception of women being only bodies fit for the kitchen or the bed lingers in the back of their heads” (Duval 1998, 58).
we chatted along the way, she suggested that I adjust the scarf over my head as it was falling back to reveal my hair. When we arrived, there were about 150, mainly Indo-Trinidadian, men milling around. Many wore kurta shirts and headwear. Fewer wore Western clothes. This dress signaled this event as both an administrative and sacred space and exercise. Ruqaya appeared slightly uncomfortable about leaving the car. However Waliyudeen, the Masjid President, called me to fold and hand out fliers. This gave us both an opportunity to get out.

We obtained 'observer' stickers with no problem. This was surprising because it suggested the ban against women attending was arbitrary, ill communicated or not shared by all in the Elections Committee. A podium was in the centre of the school hall, chairs in a semi-circle around it, and a space at the right for observers. We sat here, in chairs closest to the door. It made us more visible, but enabled easy access if we had to leave. I was happy to have this assertive and knowledgeable woman's company as I keenly wished to observe the election. As an 'outsider', new to the San Fernando Islamic community in many ways, I felt it would have been disrespectful and boldface of me to attend the election alone and uninvited. In contrast, Ruqaya was a long involved member and felt she was setting a precedent being there.

The Chairman of the Electoral Committee soon came to tell us to leave. Ruqaya said there was nothing in the constitution to make her leave. He said it was “custom”. She asked, ‘Am I doing anything wrong? Am I offending anybody?’ He asked where she was from. She told him she was from the San Fernando Jaamat and that she paid her $10 to the ladies group. He responded that they didn’t recognize those payments. Eventually, another man with an official sticker came to tell us to leave. She refused and quietly reassured me that they could not (physically) touch us. He seemed to give in. She said, “Well I am glad you understand”. Vexed, he responded that he did not understand our point and didn’t support us being there.

He went away and sent a hesitant young security guard to tell us to leave. She again said to tell her why and who said so and that she wasn’t leaving. Grumbling about “all these
men who want to decide my life”, she explained to me, “I am here because if my God asked me what I did when the ASJA was in this state, what can I say, I was home cooking?” Said she asked three other women to come but they were afraid of censure, afraid of the President General and “afraid of the men”. Constitutional rules did not prevent women from attending, but the habitual practice and pressure women felt did.

The community is small so women and men generally know each other well. Women didn’t fear individual men’s responses and, in fact, would have been surrounded by men who were neighbours, family, co-workers and friends. The election moment highlighted more generalized, gendered fears of social shame, community leaders’ censure and gossip amongst men. In this instance, Ruqaya invoked the ASJA constitution to challenge norms regarding gender segregation. She also invoked the higher authority of God, over the traditional authority of religious and administrative leaders, to justify women’s participation in an Islamic public sphere.

The event began with a dua (prayer), but the atmosphere was tense. The election officials stood next to us looking displeased. However, much confusion quickly took over and they appeared to forget about us. At one point, the President General said that observers had no right to speak or participate in the meeting. As we were the only visible observers, this was interesting. A letter had been circulated a few days earlier declaring that observers could participate, but not vote. At one point, the President said, “Sisters were not allowed and I don’t know who invited them, but they are here”. He didn’t publicly tell us to leave. Ruqaya declared, “I guess the Chairman accepts us” and was pleased that his opening address began “Brothers and Sisters”. She felt that, momentarily, he acknowledged she was part of the meeting.

For the next hours, there was quoting from the constitution and from the Qur’an, much protracted fighting for the microphone, shouting, interruption, accusation, heckling, disagreement, condemnation and rebuttal. In the midst of this rowdiness, there were quieter periods when various reports were read. On the podium to announce the election,
the man who first tried to make us leave addressed the assembly as “My beloved Sisters and Brothers”. Ruqaya noted this ironically.

After the election, men we knew from various masjids came up to joke about our temerity and how “they wanted to throw all yuh out”. Many were supportive of us staying. They also came to discuss the election. During the process, there were no controls over delegates, no voters lists, no numbered ballots and no idea how many people voted in relation to how many were eligible to vote. No one even knew if any men voted more than once. Juxtaposing the voting process to the initial atmosphere of spirituality, several complained the ASJA election was conducted like a “carnival”. In the end, the San Fernando Jama Masjid-led campaign team failed to get more than one third of the votes cast by the men of the ASJA community.

6.2 The Sacred and the Political

These morning hours spiraled together perspectives on women’s participation in governance, men’s competition over leadership, and the relationship between the sacred and political. In the following pages, I unravel these threads to show how negotiations over authority create further configurations of social and legal politics in public life. Spiritual ideals of order and balance pitch religious law against secular and non-Islamic state forms. At the same time, the economic, legislative and pedagogical interlock between the AJSA and the state, because of government-supported and ASJA-managed public schools, shows another face of the diversities of law.

The kinds of habitus associated with women and men in the San Fernando Jama Masjid also contribute to the diversities of lore. Nonetheless, values of headmanship in informal social life provide continuity to negotiations over authority across a range of seemingly dissimilar publics. The significance of masculinity, to ideals regarding participation in ASJA associational life, is more homologous to the mas camp, San Fernando Carnival Committee and Railway Line patronage networks than appears from afar.
The last two chapters looked at the interactions among varied publics, including the state, and showed their fluidity and overlap. An aesthetic architecture that hinged together law and lore explained how women and men navigated gradations of power extending from national legislation to middle-ranking state officials to market vendors. I illustrated how *everybody have to eat, love for mas* and *contacts* inflected livelihood considerations with elements of need, legality, culture and relationship.

The scenes presented, and talk about them, also highlighted wrangling over the notion of public itself. Market vendors, under the eye of police, packed and unpacked different ideas about legitimate use of public space. Their moves informally publicized authority. Mas makers and the Carnival Committee deliberated over competing bases for public leadership. In that case, the committee attempted to formally publicise authority by defining 'public' as state-led. CEPEP and URP workers and party activists maneuvered a range of reasons for public spending. In doing so, they informally privatized power. Analogously, as depicted below, women and men in the ASJA were working out terms of public participation. Here, theological and administrative leadership, and the ASJA constitution, formally privatized authority.

As other sites showed, what is considered public or private is not static but shifts. In the *masjid*, ‘public’ is associated with non-Muslim spheres considered to be impure and immoral. Women’s non-participation in such spaces aims to protect them “from the influences of non-Muslims who might degrade them”. By contrast, Islamic social space is cast as protected and ‘private’. Yet, masculine spheres within Muslim social space mark a potentially dishonouring inner ‘public’. This situates spheres associated with women as private and private spheres as appropriate for Muslim women. Such gradation illustrates the significance of women and men’s struggle to live according to their beliefs and values. Gradations of state and social power also show struggles among women and men in official positions, on pavements or in the mas camp.

Overall, it seems that such gradations do not simply reinforce hierarchies or inequities while enabling them to be challenged. Rather, they allow women and men to create a
layered continuum of different registers of authority. This means that there are more possibilities as well as more ways that contradictions can be systematically worked through. In the end, a reasonable balance among competing ideals is sought. The goal is to live in ways that fulfill what most matters, depending on the context and moment. In attempting to fulfill theological expectations, women and men make politics another place where gendered roles and identities can be established. It therefore becomes another site for establishing normativity or the world as their God intended. I have shown how an aesthetic approach shapes vendors’ or squatters’ relations with police or political activists. It also informs both the way that power is ordered in the ASJA and the reasons this order is contested.

Male *masjid* members involved in campaigning prized notions of participation, fairness and equal rights because of their Islamic cosmology. In meetings, they would comment that “Islam is political” or “Islam is about democracy”. Defense of the faith was also seen to be a call to action. There were heavy fears prior to the election that some *jamaats* would be disenfranchised and barred from voting for what they considered to be various illegitimate reasons. While distrust flowed as an undercurrent to all campaign strategies, strategists were always concerned about not damaging the reputation of the ASJA in the public eye. *Masjid* leaders contrasted their higher good with others whose strategy they accused of being about “empty promises” or “deception, money and fear”. Nonetheless, their campaign was carefully crafted to highlight their loyalty to and protective of the organization. They imagined themselves “fighting a battle of spirituality” while “the other side was trying to gain power by any means”.

While for male campaigners, “return to spirituality” was clearly about the right to question and participate, administrative accountability and brotherly fairness, it was also about reaffirming Islamic masculinity. Gender remained at the heart of spiritually-correct leadership. Although women never collectively nor vocally critiqued this position, their views were a subterranean flow beneath the drama of the election. In their own ways, many women claimed the basic value of the campaign.
As I described in Chapter 2, women and men belong to sex segregated groups. The “ladies’ groups” have their own democratic election and decision-making processes, but have no formal right to participate in the “men’s groups” which oversee the entire community. This is true at both the national association and jamaat levels, and explains why women do not usually vote in associational or Mosque Board elections. Yet, male masjid leaders work with women, including Muslim women, in national, parliamentary election campaigns. The two politically experienced women who worked on the masjid’s campaign were brought in because the men needed help and knew them from past national elections.

Some of these men even encouraged Muslim women to run for various levels of political office. Many women in masjid also vote in national general elections, suggesting that approaches to democracy are more complex than first glance conveys. Women and men’s engagement with different levels of organizational bureaucracy can be seen as attempts to legitimize how they participate in Islamic public life and other publics, and the kinds of authority they access and wield. However, the story doesn’t end here.

As this chapter exemplifies, there is a great deal of deliberation about whether or not this hierarchy and the kinds of leadership exercised really are ‘correct’ practice. In this community, Allah is the ultimate source of both authority and aesthetic. Women and men have their own ideas and interpretations sown by experience, reading, parents and extended family or maktab teachers. Female and male masjid members are also political party activists, business people, workers, neighbours and lawyers. They have attended a variety of schools, have non-Muslim friends and may like to watch Carnival bands play mas on the road. Notions of reasonableness therefore also influence this debate. As Aisha Khan points out in her study of Muslims in Trinidad, although ‘timeless’ practice originating from a source is juxtaposed to ‘inauthentic’ adaptations, “overzealous correctness has the danger of conveying intolerance or exclusivity, which are contrary to the social ideals of acceptance and “living good with people”” (1995a, 101).
Larger tropes of racial/ethnic and cultural/traditional purity must also reconcile with others emphasising equality, cooperation, modernity and progress (Mohammed 1988b). In other words, those concerned about legitimate practice and advantage interpret the forms and meanings of power offered by Islam or God in a spectrum of ways. Here, as with vendors or mas makers, normativity underlies aesthetic authority. Yet, as I show in the following pages, there is in fact less consensus than expected on issues of enfranchisement, leadership and gender.

This way of engaging order reflects masjid members’ debates about the spheres of humanity that are compatible with theological law, and the kinds of practices that enable authority to be transcendent. In other words, questions of legitimacy are anchored to concerns about fulfilling a higher purpose. I showed in the last two chapters how lore made need, family, culture, art and friendship the most powerful bases for authority among vendors, squatters, mas makers, state officials and political activists. The masjid election, in contrast, illuminates the ways that law can be valued and infused into informal social life. It highlights the power, for example, of knowledge, gender, leadership, rules and bureaucracy. These connect to women and men’s attempts to access various kinds of authority and to affirm an aesthetic sanctioned by God.

Governance practices within state bureaucracies, informal social spaces such as the market, associations such as the San Fernando Jama Masjid and sites that are a bit of both such as the Lionel Jagessar and Associates mas camp therefore show different ways that lore and law mesh. In this instance, law or ‘correct’ practice is associated with ‘tradition’, associational rules, dictates of leaders, scriptures and sayings of the Prophet Muhammad, as well as other times and places. Interestingly, it is also backed by gendered values of

2 Islamic ideals are derived from the Qur’an and traditions of Prophet Muhammad (Hadith), the example of the Prophet Muhammad (Sunnah) and the divine law (Sharia) as understood (fiqh), interpreted and applied by male religious scholars (ulema) in the past and preserved in legal texts and manuals. While the emergence of Islamic laws brought many progressive changes for women, historical and cultural interpretations and practice perpetuated women’s inequality. Many changes began to occur in the 20th century with decolonisation movements, legal reforms, and expanded educational, employment and political opportunities. The impact of social change on gender relations has sparked much debate around reconstituting ‘tradition’.

3 Khan’s (1995b, 94) analysis of authenticity, legitimacy and place situates the community in the context of diasporic nostalgias and displacements, new junctures involving displays of “correct” piety, and the “the
headmanship that are grounded in lore. At the same time, spiritual law, national law and everyday practice legitimize questioning and challenging dominant interpretations.

This bargaining over meanings of ‘public’ occurs across gradations of power in the ASJA, and along gendered lines, just as it does in state bureaucracies, patronage programmes and roadsides. Women and men’s experiences in all the study’s sites are gendered. However here, governance practices explicitly demarcate gendered spheres so that religiously informed ideals of order and balance can be achieved. This parallels artistic practices that are influenced by Native American spirituality, and mas makers’ idealization of masculine leadership and identities. Sometimes, return to spirituality looks like love for mas. At other times, its authority looks like that of contacts or even everybody have to eat. Overall, these aspects of the election were my entry points for exploring the intersections of leadership, enfranchisement, gender and normativity in associational life. The following sections survey women and men’s views about women’s place in the theology of Islam and in the practice of Islam. They then situate these perspectives in the context of ongoing international and theoretical debates about these issues.

6.3 Leadership and Gender

Whether at national, local government or institutional levels, politics is gendered. This shapes the personal characteristics seen to be ideal to participation. It helps determine
who participates and how they participate. In fact, notions of leadership both within Islam and the wider society support each other. Both reproduce male-female hierarchies, but not necessarily for the same reasons. As Taimoon, a (UNC) Local Government Councillor involved with the masjid campaign described,

Being a Muslim woman has never been an issue for me in politics. But being a woman, you are always seen as being lesser in the game. Men don’t see you as a decision maker or your contribution as important. Most people in the politics are men. You are looked at as one of the boys, but you are also not recognized. Women are forever getting left out. Maybe men are afraid of allowing women to be in power.

In terms of the ASJA, she felt that “there is a sense that women don’t need to be in leadership positions and women don’t know they can be”. Thinking it through, she added, “Yes, men are seen to be relied on to be the leaders, but even in the regular Regional Corporation⁴, men are afraid of what will happen if women get too much leadership”.

Allan Sammy, past male Deputy Mayor of San Fernando (1986-1990) agreed,

In politics, leadership is really headmanship. This is particularly so for the UNC with its Hindu and Muslim male leaders. It is male oriented and dominated. Lots of women participate, but women do not bring up gender issues and men are quite traditional.

He felt that women have been more involved in the PNM. However, literature (Taitt 1990) suggests that they have similarly been crowded into low-level participation.

In the San Fernando Jama Masjid, some women and men feel that men are the legitimate administrative and spiritual leaders of their community. They think that community governance should be left to men. This is because the guardianship or superiority, and greater rationality, of men is considered to be part of nature (fitra) (Esposito 1998, xvii). The essential idea is that women and men have separate and complementary roles. Women should, therefore, be more involved with the family and in helping the community.

⁴ As outlined in the Introduction, this is the institution responsible for Local Government.
Muniba, a 2003-2004 ASJA Ladies Association Vice President and past President of the YWMA⁵, explained, "this is how it is supposed to be just as in a household with the man as the head of the house and women having a supporting but important role". Laughingly, she joked, "In a way, men can take the blame". She was glad "the men organize their own activities" (such as the election) because "women don't have time to get involved" and "they often can't make night meetings or have kids at home". Rather, women could send husbands and sons to represent their views instead.

However, as Lateefa, a YWMA member for fifty years, rationalised, "Women should be able to run for Executive positions because they make decisions and have the economics from running the house". Here, Muniba and Lateefa associated different kinds of power with women's household role. On the one hand, women's traditional function is seen to empower them within the family. On the other, it is a source of power they can bring to participation in governance. Muniba pointed out that there were bi-annual AGMs that all jamaat members, including women, could attend. She had attended in the past and voiced an opinion, but felt "it wasn’t taken on”.

Drawing on her political experience, Taimoon elaborated, “Society is male dominated and when men alone run a system they seem to eliminate an understanding of women.

⁵ The Young Women’s Muslim Association is the women’s group of the masjid.
This excludes women further. Women should be able to sit in a room with any amount of men and make decisions” Wryly, she noted that change is particularly difficult to achieve at election time when “the conflict is over how everybody wants to be boss”.

Notions of headmanship do not alone explain why women are barred from lower Executive or sub-committee positions at the masjid or national level. Here, combined notions of tradition, spirituality and female, and therefore male and community honour, are important. In a sense, notions of honor create gender. In other words, they rely on gender to demarcate a sphere of purity and transcendence that is protected from the corruption and “carnival” of politics. The very conceptualization of women in Islam is one that is bound to duty to husband, children and the home. Theologically, honour is derived from the elevation of this relationship, its moral role and the respect it is accorded. Amongst other things, respectability is therefore marked in gendered ways.

This is true across the Caribbean (Wilson 1983, Besson 1994), but has especial significance for female, Muslim, Indo-Trinidadians. ‘Correct’ practice is not only religiously defined. It is also given meaning in opposition to the transience and ‘reputation’ stereotypically associated with Carnival (Miller 1994), Afro-Trinidadians (Hosein 2004), non-Muslims and men (Sampath 1993). Global debates on gender and nation (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1989, 1992, Jayawardena 1986, Mohagdam 1994, Mohanty and Mohanty 1990, Parker, Russo, Sommer and Yaeger 1992, Yuval-Davis and Werbner 1999) have long pointed to the effects of such oppositions on control of women’s bodies and sexuality.

Here, such effects also extend to democracy and leadership because politics is considered potentially and powerfully corrupting, especially if it becomes detached from the sacred. While Muslim men’s honour is also vulnerable, having a ‘reputation’ does not necessarily cleave them from community belonging because they do not lose masculinity or the status it affords, even if their behaviour is associated with ‘othered’ kinds of men.
More narrowly, Muslim women can less risk ‘reputation’ or access other femininities while maintaining honour, (moral) status and belonging. This is because Islamic femininity is meaningful on these terms. As Weiss (1998, 28) has observed, “It is the fear of losing respectability that drives most people to suppress their women’s freedoms”.

Given this normative order, honourable practices involve protecting women from the demeaning and polluting effects of politics, just as they involve protecting Islam and community from the exercise of authority without the ascendance and beauty of an Islamic aesthetic.

Honour, therefore, further justifies separate female and male organizations and forms of authority. Women’s peripheralisation from specific governance levels and practices maintains its place as a central community tenet. This is why clear distinction is made between women’s community and state-level participation. Women and men have first responsibility to protect the purity or privatization of an Islamic public from its non-Islamic counterparts. Maintaining an Islamic sphere keeps clear the path to accessing the power of Allah, and all God offers to those whose forms of power and participation make the world as it should be. Struggle against this distinction is therefore defined as a flouting of community ideals, ‘correct’ spiritual practice and Islamic identity itself. It risks shame, exile and relationship to God (Espinet 1992, Razack 1999). Together, these concerns work to discourage, disinterest, alienate and intimidate women, shaping their engagement with gradations of governance.

Women have enough individual mobility and autonomy in public life to choose to vote in general elections. However, largely, challenge to male Islamic terrain requires collective trespass. Ideas of citizenship as an individual right but belonging as community controlled are important here6. Community governance, and perceptions of the correct relationship between the state, a community and its leadership are therefore interlocked with headmanship practices. Consequently, a normative space which affirms women’s

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6 Talad Asad (1993) points out that the British state, while stereotyping the Muslim minority community as a collective, appears to encourage minorities to participate in British life as individuals. The cultural diversity of individuals does not threaten British identity. The politicization of religious tradition by Muslims does, however, for it questions loyalty to the nation-state, its totalizing cultural project and the hegemony of its ruling-class culture.
and men’s highest ideals is demarcated by regulation of women’s enfranchisement. The limits of their citizenship mark the outer boundaries of Islamic authority.

Captivatingly, ‘authentic’ spirituality, Islamic purity and Muslim women are all perceived to be in need of men’s protection. Helie-Lucas (1994) observes that when women accept the notion of a community in danger and fear betraying their identity, male leadership is more able to order priorities and indefinitely postpone issues of equality and empowerment. As Waliyudeen, the Masjid President concluded, “They are women first, before they are someone who holds office”. His response highlighted the importance of maintaining a sense that Islam in Trinidad was ‘traditional’, ‘pure’ and hence ‘authentic’. Here, Islamic law and lore combine. Leadership itself is about preserving religious rules and customs. Therefore, the issue is not whether governance is patriarchal, inequitable or gendered, but the extent to which this is necessary to protect community ‘purity’, spiritual living and God from corruption. Return to spirituality sought to infuse the “carnival” and “kuchoor” of politics with a higher aesthetic centred in honour.

For a similar reason, women cannot fill Executive Council positions, such as President or Vice President, that involve meeting with non-Islamic men and members of the public. It is also seen as potentially dishonourable for women to sit at ASJA meetings with men, and for men and women to mix socially. This danger is resolved through segregation and through women’s exclusion from spaces, activities and registers of authority associated with men.

Yet, contesting perspectives within the community (and internationally) suggest that women and men differ on the ideal relationship between gender, honour and governance. Interestingly, notions of equality both within Islam and the wider society contest official conceptions of appropriate leadership. For example, Saleem, a politician involved in the masjid-led campaign involved women in his own general election campaigning and relied on them as part of the ‘Muslim vote’. He asserted,
I don’t think that people in community feel that women shouldn’t be at the head of executive positions. I think they can participate across the board whether in religion or industry. If we deprive women of executive leadership roles, we exclude 50% of our human resources. I don’t see their disenfranchisement as natural or right whether in the context of a general election or the ASJA.

Nonetheless, he didn’t consider the election an appropriate time to raise ‘the Woman Question’. Nor has he advocated generally for change in ASJA practice. An Imam and past Secretary of the Education Board claimed to support the idea of women participating on the Executive and felt that ASJA could not propagate Islam in the country while excluding women. He boasted that women vote and participate in decision-making in his jamaat, and talked about the Spiritual Head looking up to past Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto.

However, he reminded me that according to both the Sunnah and the ASJA constitution, the leader of the community and the jamaat is always a male. Another member of the election strategizing team, a past ASJA President felt that “women have never been part of the ASJA decision-making, but we need their input and their help, and we need to consult them”. During his tenure, he held biannual meetings and invited women to participate and present papers. On some occasions, women sit on his jamaat’s Mosque Board meetings. He added, “Not only when dinners are being planned”.

Partha Chatterjee (1993, 127-131) shows how emergent nationalism in India similarly bifurcated the social world into an external, material, immoral, impure, modern, Western and masculine domain, versus an inner, spiritual, familial, cultural, virtuous, Eastern and female one. As Hansen (1995, 87) notes, the gendered implications meant that,

In this new nationalist construction of a modernised and ‘classicised’ culture, from where the popular elements had been purged, the woman was constructed as a goddess, and as an upholder of tradition. But the ‘new Woman’ of the nationalist era was also enlightened, educated and disciplined...
Naila, a married woman in her thirties who helps run the family business and who was the 2003-2004 Vice President of the group, similarly explained,

They preach in Islam that men and women are equal. But Maulanas might tell you things women can't do and sometimes you disagree. I sometimes feel women are kept down in Islam. Sometimes, I feel we don’t have equal rights. Telling women about staying in the home doesn’t encourage them to further and improve themselves. How can that be equal rights? Plus we are not living in an Islamic state and you have to live with others and your neighbours. I listen and decide for myself. You have to have it up here [pointing to her head] to know what to do and not be brainwashed.

More than others, this youngest member of the YWMA emphasised questioning leadership and making choices. Similarly, she felt women should be able to contribute more to decision-making in the jamaat and the ASJA. There is also general feeling that male leaders should consult women and be open to their views. Some men claimed that joint meetings take place between the ASJA Executive Committee and the ASJA Ladies Association, and between the San Fernando Jama Masjid Mosque Board and the Young Women's Muslim Association. Other women contested this, saying it only happened a few times in the past and was stopped by the early 1990s.

Both women and men consider it inappropriate for one or two young, unmarried women to attend meetings with men. Even if women attending were dressed “honourably” and both men and women there could act as witnesses, people fear gossip about illicit intimacies. Younger women I spoke to about the problem of a woman attending meetings with men simply responded with the solution to make more places for women. Besides safety and strength in numbers, this optimistic solution for more feminized public space redefined meetings in terms of women’s moral authority.

Transnationally, Islamic women’s veiling, and other pious self-representations, have enabled them to tactically assert desires for education, employment and mobility in public. As well, they have helped them negotiate religious discourse (and space) and daily realities (Torab 1996). Conforming to rules against public visibility of women’s
bodies re-establishes strict sexual mores to compensate for the loss of sexual control associated with women’s public lives. Women, and, increasingly, younger women, have used this religious idiom and these symbols to achieve personal aspirations (Jansen 1998, 88).

Yet, overall, women from the YWMA agreed that it was better to stop joint meetings to protect women’s reputation. Nonetheless, some felt that women should be able to sit and talk with men and that this could happen once the Imam is present. One suggested that they could even meet earlier than the Mosque Board meeting. Looking back over her long experience with the YWMA, Lateefa skeptically noted that only a few elite women, who were on the YWMA or ASJA Ladies Executive or family to men on the jamaat of ASJA Executive, were ever really invited in the past and that, “Women only talk among themselves about not liking exclusion”.

The 2004-2005 YWMA President, Muneera, didn’t “want to go so far as to say we want a woman President”, but would have liked to see a woman on the Mosque Board. Interestingly, she was concerned about not picking a “token” woman for the board because, for example, the men perceive that she wouldn’t give trouble. Concomitantly, she did not approve of women being disallowed from observing the ASJA election, but laughingly commented, “We are not allowed to do anything anyway”. Like the majority of other women I interviewed, Muneera had her own nuanced take on gender, leadership and governance. However, like others she was unwilling to openly challenge the current order, especially without male religious and administrative leaders’ approval. Women do not have an official, collective reaction to gendered forms of power and participation. None ever mentioned any strategy or initiative they might begin. However, many spoke of change as a “wish”.

Naila most forcefully felt that women should be able to sit on the ASJA Executive Council. She reflected,
The women are not sleeping with the men, can't they sit and discuss with them? What am I there for, just to make children and be at home? It makes you angry when you think about it. Makes you feel like less of a person.

Like the other women I interviewed, she concluded, "Yes, it's a man's world. Women don't seem to be needed in leadership positions". How then are women supposed to exercise influence? She laughed,

I guess that's why we have a little ladies group so they could say we have power among us women and say we don't need it in the men's organization. Or, so we would be out of the way and they can use us when necessary. They tell you that you have rights, but you don't have any.

As I discuss in later sections, many of the men I spoke to also thought women should be able to vote, and run for limited positions. Women and men, therefore, have mixed feelings about participation as both a form of meaning and power.

Enfranchisement is greatly valued as a right and as a technique for constructing ethnic identities (Ryan 1999b). Here, I observed its role in demarcating religious and gendered identities in Trinidad. Men's leadership and control of this transcendent sphere underscores their attempts to trump the sovereignty of state law with Islamic law. In this sense, Muslim headmen's relationship with the state is gendered and experienced as a competition among patriarchal authorities. Islamic election rules clearly mark the boundaries of state authority and non-Islamic norms of citizenship.

Yet, Islamic and state law do not merely lock horns. Instead, notions of headmanship in lore give these parallel legalities an underlying continuity. As Eudine Barritteau (1998, 11) aptly describes, "The difficulties women encounter in gaining full participation in governing structures in their countries are part of an historical continuum of an uneasy relationship between women and political participation and leadership in the Caribbean. The fact that the AJSA is incorporated by an Act of Parliament and gets state funding for its schools attests to the complementary forms of law that cross publics because of
informal values present in lore. This is a different relationship between law and lore than
presented by the market, mas camp or Railway Line.

The ASJA community, other spheres of social life and the state rely on conceptions of
leadership that reinforce each other. Past Senate President and ASJA member, Dr. Wahid
Ali (1992, 30), has depicted the politics in ASJA as reflecting “godfatherism” in national
life. This is why there are parallels with the mas camp where leadership is also a key
aspect of power and headmanship is an expression of aesthetic authority. As Lewis
(2000, 262) has observed, the assumption of leadership “by men in the nationalist project
appeared both to men and women as a natural evolution, given the relation of men to
power, access to resources and privilege”.

Ideological relations of gender mediate and differentiate women and men’s access to a
range of forms of power and gradations of authority. Non-Islamic publics, including the
state, deal with women’s participation in contradictory and inconsistent ways. As on the
Railway Line, non-participation by some is also considered significant for public life. In
this context, *return to spirituality* marks governance practices that sought to privatise a
sphere of patriarchal sovereignty without state interference or, perhaps, with state
collusion. Although about the varying guises of law, this picture also parallels police
collusion with vendors because of shared *lore*.

6.4 Elections, Enfranchisement and Participation

As the last section highlighted, ASJA women and men value many leadership qualities,
but the essential ingredient is spiritual “correctness”. However, not all male leaders’ are
seen as conducting themselves correctly. This leaves room for assertions that women’s
participation in leadership roles can encourage greater morality. An argument like this
relies on the idea that females embody moral codes. It seeks participation for the sake of
religion, family and community, not because of a discourse of rights or equality.
Responding to the argument that the election was not “a suitable domain for ladies”
because of the "rough and tumble nature of politics", "hooliganism" and "men’s behaviour at elections", Ruqaya insisted,

They are not behaving according to the Sunnah, their practice is unIslamic and maybe women should discipline them. Meetings should not be rough and if they are, the entire format of the meeting is corrupted.

Men somewhat weakly countered that elections should become more “dignified” before women participate.

Women’s mixed responses reveal both the significance of enfranchisement and its limited value. Muniba did not feel disenfranchised because she did not think women should be involved in the kuchoor (confusion) of men’s elections. However, notably, she added, “We have no influence there anyway”. While women may argue that they have no direct influence, they frequently claim that they influence their husbands. Lily, the 2004-2005 YWMA President, maintained, “Our husbands take into account what we feel when they vote. Unofficially we have great say. We let people know if there is somebody we don’t like.”

Successful strategies may not directly challenge and some feminists (Ripenburg 1998, 147) have suggested that the political significance of women in the private and informal sphere cannot be overlooked. They may play an invisible political role influencing decisions taken in the ‘public’ sphere through their husbands and sons. Women may (and perhaps must) respond in subtle ways to the sexism in their cultural and political organizations, but clearly they would like other options. Even women leaders who do not resent disenfranchisement would vote for the masjid and ASJA Executives if given the opportunity. They may also choose women for these bodies if female candidates were permitted.

Interestingly, while Ruqaya, who attended the election with me, agreed that women should be able to vote in any election because “we have that right”, she didn’t feel that this right was important at a jamaat level. Instead, she preferred to see her opinion
"tabled on the ladies side". Rather than thinking it necessary to vote for or sit on the "men's Executive", she wanted to be heard by the women's Executive and have her views communicated to the men. She continued,

> Women can exercise influence through opinions from the ladies section being communicated to the male Executive, for example, if they have an issue with an imam's *khutbah* appearing chauvinistic. A formal complaint can go forward.

She acknowledged, however, that this happens less than it should because "when women meet they are afraid to deal with contentious issues because of cultural and social patriarchy".

Other women completely disagreed with their disenfranchisement. "Knowing how the men behave there", Lateefa did not want to attend or participate in the election. Nonetheless, she viewed voting, both nationally and in the ASJA, as her "right". She signed Ruqaya's petition advocating this. Her explanation shows her own notions of correct spiritual practice. She protested, "Women can't vote because they [male leadership] misunderstand the Qur'an. We are equal in the Qur'an. We are part of the *jamaat*, men alone shouldn't have that right [to vote]". In addition to an Islamic discourse on equality and rights, Naila also described a distrust of men's decisions. She asserted,

> If we have equal rights, we should be able to vote. Women should have a say in decisions men make because it affects you one way or another. We can't rely on a man to not vote in a leader they know is bad. Name and wealth is a big thing in who people choose as leaders.

The women involved in campaigning championed a more constitution-based critique. They referred to the fact that nothing in the ASJA constitution stipulates that women cannot vote. Shazeeda thought that women's participation on the ASJA Executive Council would improve its functioning and felt women should agitate for this change. Taimoon wanted to see Imams "take it on and take to the ASJA meetings and to the election". In contrast, accepting their disenfranchisement felt, as Shazeeda described, like "accepting a role as housemaker, responsible for children only and not being able to
move around on our own or not voting because your husband told you not to”. While Shazeeda said she did bring it up with the Spiritual Head, the other didn’t raise it in the campaign meetings because she thought the men saw “women’s place as second in the Islamic community and male decisions as final and to be accepted”.

Not quite accepting this, Maulana, the Spiritual Head reasoned that, “women might be disenfranchised in this system but there are no clear cut rules on women’s participation. There is a culture in a place and you apply the rules of Islam and the combination varies across culture”. He considered women’s suffrage to be new to the culture and the ASJA a traditional organization that has “not yet taken the leap”. He admitted that, in an equitable and uncorrupted voting system, women should be able to vote. This is negated by his view of both national and ASJA elections as corrupted practice.

Some men in Executive positions also thought that women should not have been barred from observing the election because “Islam is about equal rights”. One community elder, Haji Kareem, felt women should also be able to run for election and vote. He concluded,

There are women with good Islamic training who do a lot of work for the organization and have good qualities. But it is up to the women to fight for that right. Because if you follow custom and tradition, where are you going?

I asked Saleem, the politician, why they didn’t include women. He responded,

I didn’t feel that way because the core group had women – including yourself. I don’t think the male leaders part, which you are putting in what you write, in terms of the election, is fair. The male thing might have been in the election generally so it is to our credit that we even had women in our group.

His response didn’t acknowledge that the male Imams, Maulanas, past Mosque Board or ASJA Executive Council members and the President of the masjid were the decision makers. Yet, he admitted, “Well, they made the decisions and we [himself, the Masjid President, the two women and myself] did the work.” As a result, he concluded, “I submit
to you that we had more female participation than is normally considered possible.” Yet, his further comments suggest underlying ambivalence throughout about women’s participation. He continued,

I am not sure whether the Maulana wanted any women involved at all. I got the impression that he wasn’t too keen. Did you notice that there were hardly any women there when he was in the meetings? He was fully aware of why you were there – you were like family, because you were another Maulana’s niece, also you were observing, but I could see the natural discomfort.

His final argument was that women were “not ready” to participate. This is because he unexpectedly approached the YWMA one day during their meeting to explain the campaign and its challenges. He asked them to speak to their male family, to write to newspapers or help in other small ways. The women were a surprising combination of skeptical and disinterested. One exclaimed, “Why should I help? I pay my membership and I cannot even vote”. Others threw in, “Too long ASJA has been a boys club!”, “Why are women thrown out of meetings?!” The women also disliked the ad hoc way they were approached and were a tougher crowd than the politician anticipated. He retreated suggesting they should put forward a policy for women in the ASJA.

The Masjid President (2002-2005), Waliyudeen, also felt women should be able to vote, but did not consider it the best way for women to make a difference at the jamaat level. Instead, he idealised how “wives let men feel they are the bosses” while in reality they run the jamaat “using hikmat” (wisdom). In practice, this describes influencing decisions by “not directly challenging or rocking the boat because you will be sidelined or thrown off”. He felt this ‘wisdom’ showed women they didn’t need to be President of the masjid to exercise power. He suggested the women accept feminized sources of power because, “It is Sharia law versus secular law. You could use a secular method to set up structures for governing a religious organization, but this is the wrong approach because the Surah should determine everything”.

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A Past President General of the ASJA admitted that interpretation of Sharia law is one of the main barriers to women’s participation. He suggested that women should be able to sit on the ASJA Executive (in appropriate posts) if they are capable of the work required. This is unlikely to occur at the masjid, as its Imam doesn’t favour women’s organizational participation. Lily, a past YWMA President, felt it significant that the Imam is Pakistani and not Trinidadian, and that he wouldn’t share the perspective of Trinidadian Muslim women who can participate in the rest of society. The Imam’s response highlights male fears that women’s participation could lead to gossip and dishonour (particularly directed against women). He also doesn’t support women’s involvement in non-Muslim organizations. However, spiritual leaders have not consistently held this position.

Yet, without formal right to representation, women must rely on letters to the Mosque Board or informal means of access to spheres of male power. In particular, family networks enable this. Family is itself associated with protection of women, morality and headmanship. Therefore, it facilitates a great deal for women by being a ‘safe’ space legitimating their participation in public and male domains.

6.5 Family and Informality

Figure 39: Leadership in Action
Letters from the women’s ‘side’ to the men’s ‘side’ and telephone conversations are the primary means of formal communication. This is true both for the ASJA Ladies Group and the YWMA. Women’s access to decision-making and information is far more limited in this more formally exercised relationship. As well, they are less likely to participate in discussions with men over matters related to the ASJA or masjid. YWMA members complain that the Mosque Board doesn’t respond to their letters. Mosque Board members complain the group harasses them about trivialities, and it is too time consuming to respond in writing. Frequent breakdown of formal communication channels often leads to greater division, misunderstanding and mutual diffidence. This seriously questions the argument that women do not need formalized representation on the Mosque Board because, at this jamaat level, men and women leaders can easily meet and chat.

In the past, when female family members of the Masjid President have held the leadership of the women’s group, informal communication is more effective. For example, in the YWMA’s last election, Lily, the Masjid President’s sister became President of the women’s group. This greatly facilitates women’s knowledge of and participation in decisions regarding the masjid as they can listen in when informal discussions are held at their own or a family member’s home. In rare instances, they can attend a meeting as a male family member will safeguard and affirm their honour.

Their informal and direct access to decision makers means that they can exercise greater influence and make suggestions. Lily described it as having “to be fas (inquisitive) enough to find out what going on and give advice too”. She said she learned from her uncle (a past ASJA President General) and her father (a past Masjid President) that women’s participation was important when necessary. Yet, without good informal relations, communication between the Mosque Board (seen to be the men’s Executive) and the Young Women's Muslim Association (the women’s Executive), and women’s influence, is significantly limited.

Men cast the YWMA as a space where “women can do what they want”. They claim that the organization has “influence and power in decision-making because they can make
suggestions to the President General if they want, and he will listen”. However, women’s responses suggest this is easier said than done. Muneera, the 2003-2004 YWMA President complained,

The Mosque President never responds to our letters and he makes plans without consulting us. Sometimes, it feels like there is no cooperation, no love, no thanks. Sometimes I feel they use the women when they need us to decorate or fix the tables and plates. But we are not invited to meetings of the Board and they don’t always let us know what is going on.

She described wanting to see the YWMA as more a part of the masjid where “they involve us in their projects and planning and meetings, and we have better communication.” Some of this feeling stems from women’s sense that their activities and concerns are not seen to be as important as those of the male-run Mosque Board. The Masjid President, feeling somewhat harassed by the YWMA’s letters, criticised them for both acting autonomously and wanting to be consulted. He commented,

If they want to be involved, they shouldn’t take attitude to the Board as if they have a right to be part of the process. Bringing such attitude is like looking for licks one time. They should come to help, not demand. If they come thinking they can muscle their way in, it is not going to work. What they have to do is work nicely with the Masjid Board.

He was quite critical that the women’s group did “teas, but not dawa or community work”. A past Young Women's Muslim Association President agreed that the groups should proactively call the President or Imam and find out how they could help. She also saw the YWMA’s role as one of Islamic education and supporting the Mosque Board. However, for her, the group was additionally “the women’s place of power”.

### 6.6 Place and Power

Women mobilize amongst other women and from places of power such as within the family because this is a normative ideal. Their challenges are also limited by fear of shame and loss of community. As Naila described, “Maybe nobody would go for it and
you would get pelt out”. As someone who values her right to vote in national politics, and has always voted, she was frustrated at the discrepancy in women’s acceptance of their rights at national and community levels. She responded,

Women accept that because they are stupid. We don’t know our rights. Is it that we are afraid of religion or the men in our religion or just from time immemorial do you have it in your head that you are supposed to be like that? Is it the influence of history? Maybe no one cares. Maybe we are intimidated by men and religious politics, you know, the male aspects of the organization.

Muneera also observed,

To exercise influence, you would have to be drastic, and demand to be heard. Otherwise, I don’t know. Maybe you would have to be like the Vice President who is able to talk to her father and brother who are on the Mosque Board and then they may bring her views to the meeting.

As interviews with these women suggest, most are not willing to be “drastic” or to make demands for representation for fear of male and female community members’ response. Women also don’t challenge because, larger than themselves, is the jamaat and the masjid, and the need to respect their religion, community and leaders. These are always put first because they together symbolize an aesthetic of order, balance and honour. As the group President continued, “There is something about women, they don’t always stand up for their rights. Their husband’s view is important and, even in [general] elections, if they tell them not to vote, some women wouldn’t”.

In the community, both women and men that I interviewed claimed that women can talk to their husbands or their Imam when they want to exercise influence. However, a woman in the Association, who has been participating from its beginning, felt that “women have no right or voice because talking to your husband makes no difference because he will think just like his brother”. She felt writing letters didn’t make them listen either. Instead, she advocated, “Ladies have to get up, form themselves in a group, have a meeting and that will lead to us making decisions at the top. More people will come out because now
women want to have a say”. “But”, she admitted, “Some women will say we not supposed to do that”.

More than one woman explained the discrepancy between women’s rights at national and community levels as “a cultural thing” or “more historical than natural or right”. Some reasoned that, “the community had not yet evolved”. Ruqaya similarly argued,

The traditional Muslim woman has been timid and she has not paid attend to the role she is supposed to play in the community. Also, there are forces pushing them not to participate. Education in Islam makes a difference, gives them a different sense of their role rather than those who only know about the articles of faith, fiqh (laws) and the bulk of daily living education such as the names of angels and duas. Unless women feel they can make a statement about scriptures, they are likely to challenge less.

She felt grounded in a knowledge of Islam and felt she knew the laws and “when men are talking stupidness”. “Plus”, she added, “I fear Allah more than I fear men.” These perspectives build on an older tradition of critique by Islamic reformers who distinguish between religious observance and social regulations and relations (Esposito 1998, xiv). As Leila Ahmed (1992b, 122) has pointed out, “reformers and feminists repeatedly try to affirm (with remarkable tenacity and often too with ingenuity) that the reforms they seek involve no disloyalty to Islam, that they in fact are in conformity with it, and if not in conformity with the letter and actual text of the culture’s central formulation, then in conformity with what nevertheless is still there somehow, in the spirit not quite caught by the words”. Ruqya, and other women’s responses, also highlight that the closer women feel to God, the more powerful they feel they are and can potentially be.

More than one woman spoke about wanting to see change, but being too afraid to challenge male leaders or their disenfranchisement. Even women, who said they would vote in general elections even if their husband did not want them to, were unwilling to publicly defy current practice. One woman who also wanted to attend the election claimed fear stopped her. She related how a man she knew from the ASJA, and from her
jamaat, called and said that police would be at the election stopping women from going inside. He said that ASJA Executive Council members heard that a couple of women were planning to attend the meeting. He called her “as a friend” and said, “You will be embarrassed, police will not let you inside”.

Similarly, women felt change was difficult to achieve at the national executive level because “the ASJA Ladies as a group don’t want to rock the boat”. Even women involved in other ASJA masjids complain, “That is how we are taught it must be. We are taught to be subdued”. Muneera agreed, pointing out that the women disagreed quietly, amongst themselves because “we see ourselves as playing a role in decision making in the mosque, but they don’t see it that way”.

Taimoon, the Local Government Councillor, suggested that women consider their enfranchisement as citizens important because “Muslims are a large part of the Indo-Trinidadian population and Muslim votes are important in an ethnically divided political system”. However, the ASJA constitution is posed in opposition to the national constitution in terms of its fundamental premises, and the distinction between the spiritual and secular. Thus, she felt, “the two are seen as different and women are disciplined to follow”.

Another woman explained,

I think the small size of the Muslim population makes a difference. We have been contented to let the disparity go as it is. If there was a larger support section we might be braver. Also it is part of the Sunnah, if you believe your challenge will cause the destruction of your belief, then do not challenge, just practice what you want for yourself. It is better to live than fight and be destroyed especially if you are a minority, better to preserve your faith for your children and maybe they might make that change. Better to stay quiet than be destroyed and crushed. I see this as a strategic choice of women.
Interestingly, fear of gossip, ostracism or blame doesn’t stop all Muslim women from questioning and challenging. Though rare, there are women on the Mosque Board at other masjids. Other women are involved in political parties. It is clear that women who are involved in political parties, state governance structures, full-time independent employment and non-Muslim organizations are more likely to contest disenfranchisement and marginalisation in their communities. It is this small group that most often raised themes of equality and rights. Aside from this group, younger women in their teens to early thirties also used this language.

In striking contrast to women in the ASJA, women in other Islamic organizations, such as the Nur ul Islam, overtly challenge attempts to marginalize them. Partly, this is due to their leadership by a high-ranking, female PNM politician. Her political experience has strengthened her willingness to confront sexism. However, this is also because the constitution of the organization incorporates women’s right to representation on the Mosque Board. Finally, male family members, involved since the organisation’s inception, support the women. This helps to legitimate their actions in response to re-interpretations of correct Islamic practice. The group continues to have their own elections and events, but no inclusion in overall decision-making. Women’s organizing itself is discouraged as it is argued that the women’s events encourage mixing among the sexes. The politician passionately related,

> We have been fighting them. Sometime ago, they moved the partition reducing women’s space, relying on a fatwa that says men read in front and women at the back. Our mosque was very progressive with women and men reading side by side. The women confronted the men and were prepared to move and push down the partition. We were on the verge of having to push it down on the men ten years ago and they are doing it again.

More orthodox “ASJA practices and policies” of disallowing women from the Executive have influenced new approaches over the decades. Even in this organization, there are men who support women’s participation. However, they are not outspoken.

Yet, this woman strongly argued,
You can't be intimidated. It is a lot of dotishness. It requires a lot of sensitization, networking, supporting. We have to remove the gender bias. That is something the Muslim community has to address. They have to decide where they see themselves in a Trinidadian society. I come from a background of being involved in many Indian cultural activities. They said you can't be a Muslim and involved in Islamic affairs and be doing that. But for a national perspective, we have the right to retain our cultural and religious practices.

Regarding her sense of being discriminated against, she reasoned,

This goes against every tenet of the government and the culture of the country. We have been part of Beijing and all these conferences for gender equity and equality. There is a ministry to ensure mainstreaming. Some organizations accept it and go along with it. Some have a problem with it. Did you know ASJA had representatives at the women's conference in 1975? To be progressive, to move forward in the jamaat you need to involve the women. Women are not donkeys.

This woman considered disenfranchisement to be based on a "chauvinistic", "tribal" way of organizing the community, and a strategy to keep women out of power. She felt that this way of thinking has been adopted by women so that they their enfranchisement in national politics and their limited participation and disenfranchisement in community politics become two separate experiences.

Halima Sa'adia Kassim's (1999) history of community organizations and education among Indo-Trinidadian Muslims provides an historical view to women's and men's values and practices. Kassim's research emphasises the role religion and gender play in demarcating intra-ethnic and organizational boundaries. In particular, Muslim women's struggles against various consequences of sex segregation and purdah since the 1950s signal their negotiation with constitutive aspects of the Muslim community. They were remarkably absent from masjids until the 1930s and from Muslim organizations almost up to the 1950s. When they began to access greater secular and Islamic education, they were seen to be (silent) receptacles, but not deliverers of knowledge (except to children). Their admittance to mosques, meetings, lecture podiums and publications was a source of
intense inter-organisational and ideological conflict. Issues of their organizational
enfranchisement, participation and leadership have been contentious for decades.

Yet, the establishment of the women’s groups discussed in this chapter and Muslim
women’s expanding visibility is testimony to their rising consciousness of their
marginalisation. It highlights their success in wrangling concessions. Kassim’s study
illustrates how Trinidadian Muslim women variously supported patriarchal ideas and
men’s attempts to ameliorate their conditions. Yet, they slowly undermined patriarchal
stronghold throughout the early decades of the twentieth century. This was particularly
significant because of the ASJA’s (continuing) orthodox and “dubious protection”
(Kassim 1999, 47) of women from participation in mixed and public spaces. The
persistence of the gendered spaces and roles is part of a decades-long story.

I have shown how aesthetic authority explains governance practices amongst market
vendors, mas makers, squatters, police, political activists, Local Government Councilors
and, now, Muslim women and men. Within and between all these groups, normativity or
what most matters has grounded their practices and relationships. However, there is often
contestation over what it is that really should matter most, who gets to decide and how
this plays out within families, friendships, associational life, livelihood practices,
government and democracy. Relationship to God, knowledge, religious prescriptions,
need and family facilitates an often-submerged debate about governance in the ASJA.

Male leaders must make an effort to maintain the hegemony of their own interpretations
of legitimate authority. These efforts played out in campaigning and voting during the
ASJA election. At another tier, some women and men remain skeptical that the current
organization of authority truly serves an aesthetic rather than excessively patriarchal or
bureaucratic ideal. The debates here are, therefore, about the limits of advantage. This
includes advantage of women’s gendered roles, male leaders’ cooperativeness,
interpretations of what God wants, imams’ needs and democratic processes.
Many homologous versions of lore and law have flowed through the negotiations and navigations witnessed in these sites. Here alone, varying forms of civic and Islamic law and custom connect women and men’s lives to Trinidad, the Middle East, India and specific kinds of Islamic practices in these places. While gender is a constitutive aspect of women and men’s experiences, in this instance it is considered key to protecting what most matters.

Rather than Islam being about democracy, *return to spirituality* highlighted an emphasis that democracy should be about Islam. Relationships among men, between women and men, and between each and politics or money or the sexual division of labour are ultimately about affirming Allah and *umma* (community). The relationship between political authority, lore and the aesthetic of individual practice twists across sites. Past chapters showed the ways that pulling authority downward through formality to individual practice preserves order. In this chapter, the concern centred on preserving both higher authority and lore from the vagaries of the merely contingent or the much lower authority of human choice, both of which are represented by democracy.

6.7 The Challenges of Legitimate Authority
This chapter has shown how citizenship rights, habitual practices from homeland and motherland (Khan 1995a), loyalty to traditional leaders, and competing interpretations of Islamic law all thread through men’s and women’s experiences of governance and participation. I explored the ways that governance establishes religious and gender identities, and the boundaries between ideals of ‘public’ and ‘private’.

Mostly I have been concerned with charting connections and contradictions in relation to law, lore, aesthetic and authority. For example, the *masjid*-based election team involved two Muslim women, from other ASJA *jamaats*, who were both experienced political activists in national elections. One had been a leader in union organizing and campaign manager for many years, and the other held a seat in Local Government. These women contributed expertly and immensely, as the politician who asked for their help knew they would.

Men were willing to work with women for ‘democracy’ and Islam. Yet, neither the team nor these women ever seriously raised the issue of how women would gain from their efforts. Several men on the team also felt that women should be more involved in the election and in governance generally. Yet, this view was never considered for public attention. Many women felt the same way, but were disinterested or unwilling to publicly contest current logic. Both men and women held widely diverse views about the extent to which women should be more involved, suggesting little clear consensus.

Democracy was also valued by both women’s and men’s groups. Elections and voting over decisions were regular practices, and many felt that “Islam is about democracy”. Yet, among both groups, traditional authority exercised tremendous influence. This was so even while some men and women disagreed with traditional spiritual and administrative leaders’ views. In their responses, the *Qur’an* and *Sunnah* variously limited women’s participation and leadership, and justified equal participation.

Similarly, for some, living in Trinidad emphasized the importance of Islamic distinctiveness. For others, it provided a basis for recognizing the porous ethnic, religious
and cultural boundaries of their community. Still others, such as those who had made hajj, were acutely concerned about the respectability of (Indo) Trinidadian Islam amidst more international Islamic movements. Consensus was constantly negotiated using appeals to various sources of authority, challenges to the legitimacy of different people’s interpretations, habitus and shifting rhetoric regarding ‘public’ decision-making. Return to spirituality alternately connected to all of these. Like love for mas, it presented a higher spiritual authority that is connected to traditional leadership, habitual practice and a deep commitment to sociality.

6.7.1 Legitimate Authority in Muslim Women’s Debates

My own interpretation of women’s experiences in the ASJA is grounded in the ways that these negotiations have been framed by Islamic feminisms of various kinds. The term “Islamic feminism” is quite contested. It labels a heterogeneous grouping of women’s organisations and activities. Largely, these aim to improve women’s status and meet their practical needs. They may overtly challenge a range of rules and social norms or seek to reinforce nationalist and religious prescriptions. In the view of secular feminists,

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There is also writing on Islam, globalisation, and gendered economic and political participation (Khoury and Azzam 1985; Khoury and Moghadam 1995; Hijab 1988; Dourmato and Posusney 2003). Key issues dominating the literature include education, seclusion, rape and violence, comportment and sexuality, family laws regarding marriage, divorce and inheritance, and country-specific struggles for greater political participation. Much is written exploring a long history of Islamic feminisms and their relation to Islamic theology and Western feminisms (Ahmed 1982; Ghoussoub 1987; Moghadam 1994b, 1994c, Moghissi 1999; Yamani 1996; Brand 1998a, 1998b; Badran 1999; Cooke 2001). There is also comparison to other religiously-defined feminisms and fundamentalisms (Christ and Plaskow 1979; Hussain 1984, Caplan 1987; Cooy, Eakin and McDaniel 1991; Sagal and Yuval-Davis 1992; Asad 1993; Marty and Appleby 1993; Hawley 1994; King 1994; Moghamdam 1994a; Brink and Mencher 1997; Roald 1998; Keddie 1999; el-Teske and Tetreault 2000; Tohidi and Bayes 2001).

8 Such is the heterogeneity that, to provide two examples, while Western feminists seek to abolish the gendered division of labour, Islamists consider this to safeguard women’s interests and prevent them from being overly exploited. Whereas feminists advocate state-provided childcare, Islamists fear this will contribute to family breakdown and affirm that childcare is women’s primary concern (Haddad 1998, 23).

9 Such as Juliette Minces, Mai Ghoussoub, Haideh Moghissi and Haleh Afshar.
these prescriptions may offer women some agency, but they impede women’s systemic advancement. Secular feminists advance a (heavily scorned) “westocentric” (Yuval-Davis 1997, 310), global human rights discourse. Their fundamental premise is that secular thought, institutions and civil society best protect women’s rights.

Other feminists\(^\text{11}\) have rebelled against western feminism. They advocate re-interpreting Islamic codes to emphasise the Quran’s egalitarian and emancipatory message. They examine how sexual politics shapes religious knowledge and authority in ways that enable patriarchal readings of the Quran (Barlas 2002). In addition to advancing women’s right to \(\textit{ijtehad}\) (independent reasoning), they reject an orthodox view of gender complementarity and asymmetry as based in natural and divine law (Moghadam 2002, 26). Bluntly put, it is as if women question the authority of \(\textit{tafsir}\), from which they are largely excluded anyway.

Others who closely identify with Islamic law argue that it justly protects and genuinely provides for women’s rights. Even when they accept that there are appropriate gender differences, they disagree that they limit women and men to only those spheres and roles (Roald 1998). In reaction to critiques of the religion, they highlight how religiosity can empower women to demand equality, challenge family-level patriarchy, participate in new arenas and to interpret the Quran from a less androcentric perspective (Duval 1998, 64). This group finds a sense of empowerment in Islamist movements whose culturally different ideology incorporates religious commitment, moral indignation and political participation (Haddad 1998, 19). Part of the resurgence of Islam over the last several decades has, therefore, involved challenging western- and secular-defined modernity with an Islamic-modernist alternative (Esposito 1998, xxi).

Rather than Islam per se, many of the latter two groups assert that it is patriarchal values, within nationalist and religious ideologies, political economy and culture, that oppress women. Avoiding the easy dualism of a hegemonic West (‘modernity’) and defensive

\(^{10}\) She uses this term rather than ‘Eurocentric’ “to highlight the fact that ‘the western front’ expands far beyond Europe” (1997, 25).

\(^{11}\) Such as Fatima Mernissi, Freda Hussain, Azizah al-Hibri, Riffat Hassan and Asma Barlas.
Islam (‘tradition’), they see continuity of patriarchal ideals in both spheres. Both discourses use modern disciplinary and normalizing regimes of power. Nostalgia for selective traditions is also considered to be male-centred and modern (Tohidi and Bayes 2001, 38, Nasr 1995). Essentially, women in this grouping contribute to the feminization of political, economic and religious decision-making processes. As Haidah Moghissi (1994, 183) has written on Iranian women’s activism, “The Islamic regime has not opened the gates. Women are jumping over the fences”. There is, therefore, much international precedent for Muslim women’s mobilization for greater rights and participation.

While Muslim women’s situations share commonalities, Islamic countries’ internal and comparative heterogeneity must be kept in mind12. As El-Solh and Mabro (1993, 5) caution, class, kinship, ethnicity and nationalism influence the exercise of patriarchy. They affect the practice of Islam and what is considered properly Islamic (Kandiyoti 1991b, 24). Enfranchisement itself has been and remains a central struggle for Muslim feminists from Afghanistan to Sudan. With minor exceptions across the Middle East, informal political culture and parliamentary democracy (where it exists) are gender segregated. Women have struggled to fill political and bureaucratic positions. Among other reasons, men may even “feel threatened by the potential of uncontrolled educated or economically independent women who may compromise their honour and therefore their status among other men” (Weiss 1998, 130).

Thus, somewhat ironically, Tohidi and Bayes (2001, 40-41) observe that new Islamist opposition movements “cannot gain women’s support without letting women mobilize

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12 For example, in the “traditional” constitutions of Kuwait, the Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar, Northern Yemen and Sudan, women are consider bound to the family as wives and mothers. In the “progressive” constitutions of Syria, Southern Yemen, Algeria and (pre-US invasion) Iraq, women are also enabled to work and engage in the political process. In “accommodationist” constitutions such as those in Morocco and Egypt, women have wide ranging rights and opportunities, contingent on not subverting the Islamic sharia (Haddad 1998, 6). These differences are linked to larger Arab struggles for political autonomy, debates about the role of Islam in the state and differences among fundamentalist, traditional and modernist perspectives (El Solh and Mabro 1993, 6). Although I do not explore this literature here, it is worth noting that Islam is no more repressive toward women than Judaism and Christianity (Memissi 1991, vi, vii). The conservative Muslim-Catholic religious alliance against women’s rights suggests that these issues span a wider set of debates between authorities over religious doctrine, women and feminists (Burns, Scholzman and Verba 2001).
and be actively present in the public and political domain”. Yet, “they do not know what to do with them after taking power and consolidating an Islamist state”. Nationalist, independence and even civil rights movements in the twentieth century have also faced the same accusation. However, pressure for reform and equal rights, and female constituents’ influence in helping Islamic elites retain state power, can lead to limited reforms and concessions regarding women’s civil rights. This highlights how religion alone does not explain the continuum of Muslim women’s gender identities and rights in different cultural and national settings. Nor, the choices they are empowered to make (Memissi 1993). Thus, although the Islamic community perceives itself as unified, Islam is fundamentally “plastic” and expressed through diverse practices (Bouhdiba 1985).

Studies of Islamic communities and Muslim women in non-Muslim countries suggest varied implications13. Women may use Islam in heterogenous ways as a “stock of symbols, signs and signals” to mark a sense of difference and belonging (Jansen 1998, 75). In fact, whether coming from Islamic theological, Islamic feminist or Western feminist perspectives, scholarship appears compelled to engage with very modern conceptions of empowerment, choice, individuation, identity and gender asymmetry. Such an engagement fits with approaches in Trinidadian literature. Caribbean feminist scholars have shifted focus from an earlier dualistic, persistence-change paradigm to one that explores Indo-Trinidadian ethnic and religious identities as heterogeneous, multiple and gendered. With a clear emphasis on women’s agency and voice, they advocate examining women’s contestations as well as their collusions and desires to retain community.

13 Situated in ghettoized communities, Muslims’ views and lives may not be significantly affected by the wider society. However, where there is greater social interaction, there may be adaptation, awakening and renewal of beliefs, and various alterations in the way that community boundaries are defined (Roald 2001). Women may continue to have to struggle to participate, this time in secular governance (Keskin-Kozat 2003). They may have greater room to experiment with multiple sexualities and identities or may long for a sense of stability left behind (Khan 2002). Conspicuous consumption may become a way of expressing spirituality (D’Alisera 2001). Muslims may treat Islam as a mobile ‘home’ amidst the alienation of their new surroundings (McMicheal 2002).
While return to spirituality invokes the authority of God, 'tradition' and 'correct' practice, it also raises issues of participation. In this sense, it parallels questions being worked out through the habitus of other publics in this study. It also presents an analogy to the ways that notions of public and private are negotiated in other contexts. While the relationship between informality and formality is overtly gendered, there are many similarities to the ways that lore and law are claimed. From a different perspective, the San Fernando Jama Masjid comprises an organized association with formal authority and bureaucratic hierarchy.

The purpose of leadership, tiers of power and proscribed participation is to collectively cherish relationship, reasonableness and reciprocity in specific ways. Though it seems to introduce very different themes, these nonetheless lie alongside those appearing in the market, mas camp and mosque as legitimate authority is lived. Amongst masjid members, relationship is in fact what is most inalienable, even more than votes or voice. Though this emerges in other sites, it is most sacrosanct here.

Return to spirituality, as an expression of normativity and ideals of order, contributes to the overall architecture for understanding how governance and participation play out in Trinidadian social life. In this instance, it points to the ways that political ideals such as enfranchisement, democracy and citizenship are worked through. It confirms that gradations of power influence how norms filter through governance practices. It emphasizes the significance of both formal restrictions and discursive privatizing. I touched on these factors in an earlier discussion of how publics, subpublics and constitutive stratification lines kindle plural perspectives.

As with market vendors and police or mas makers and Carnival Committee members, there is antagonism and divergence as well as agreement here. These are stimulated by relative capacities to construct reality, disagreement over labeling practices 'private' or 'public', and alternative ways of accessing public life. Women and men in the ASJA also
participate in other publics and this shapes their ideals. Even those with formalized authority often work out accepted practice informally and tolerantly. For example, while the Masjid President, ASJA President-General, the Spiritual Head and the male politician clearly held reservations about my participation and possible interpretations, they all good-naturedly let me attend meetings, interview them and seek their feedback on this chapter.

Nilüfer Göle (2002, 174) notes that Muslims’ contemporary use of communication networks, participation in public debates, consumption patterns and values of individuation have fed Islam’s global penetration into the social fibre and imaginary. They have enhanced its ability to raise political questions about the foundational principles of collective life, common space, progressive politics and the Western liberal self. In this light, “Exploring these Islamic makings of the self and the micro-practices associated with it will lead us to understand new social imaginaries and the transformations of the public sphere” (ibid, 174). In other words, as I outlined in Chapter 4, public life is not pre-established, but is continually constituted and negotiated through micropractices that perform ways of being public, and through women and men’s reflexivity about “the relations, actions, symbols, meanings, and codes, roles, statuses, social structures, ethical and legal rules, and other sociocultural components which make up their public ‘selves’” (ibid, 83).

The individuals and groups discussed in these pages illuminate the importance of what matters to women and men. This determines what they consider worth engaging with, how they sort out unexpected outcomes and constraints, and why they align with some influences over others. What is considered to matter most is deeply grounded in an everyday collective sense of the normative. Ideals of and desires for respectability, understood as spiritual obedience, correctness and fulfillment, appear here. Women and men's differential access to and expression of these ideals illuminate how reputation and respectability, the kinds of status they afford, and the ways they connect to God, public life and democracy are gendered.
As I discussed in the Introduction, it is ideals and desires for respectability that enable each site to appear homologous to the others. *Everybody have to eat* interprets illegality in terms that emphasise honesty, family, hard work and provision of food. *Love for mas* underscores the respect, recognition and reciprocity that bandleader Rosemary Kuru Jagessar commands as Queen of the Band. *Contacts* is precisely about being favourably looked upon, trusted, valued and looked after by those who have access to a variety of forms of power. It is also about trying to avoid dependence on illegal sources of income to provide for one’s family. This is particularly important to vulnerable groups of women and to men who shun the immorality associated with drug dealing and criminality. These chapters show women and men’s resistances, but also the myriad ways they claim power through their alignments with respectability.

_Return to spirituality_ had specific and explicit meanings associated with the election, but it also reaffirmed much that is taken for granted. This is why, as an entry to understanding ASJA habitus and practice, it was powerfully political. It reproduced and regulated a variety of relationships to authority, to the ‘state’, to non-Muslim social spheres, to people of different creeds, and to women and men of the ASJA. It also provided the aesthetic against which women and men of the San Fernando _jamaat_ could evaluate different sources of authority.

ASJA Islamic practice recognizes an autonomous place for women’s organizing and power while denying women’s authority equality within the _umma_. While this occurs for the reasons discussed above, it would be naïve to not acknowledge that women’s greater participation in leadership and democracy would also feminize a public sphere overtly defined by and for masculinity and masculine domination. This would expand women’s options for both respectability and reputation, an experience central to male privilege (Sampath 1993, Hosein 2004), and it would make men both more formally and informally accountable to women. Putting the register of authority in the ASJA in such flux would shake up the forms of power and meaning associated with gender as well as those associated with community and religion. Situated in the larger non-Islamic public sphere, this could lead to increased feelings of community vulnerability and, for men,
lesser status in the national (and international) competition among patriarchies (Mohammed 1994, 2002). It makes sense, then, that contestations over authority in the ASJA seek to maintain gendered notions of purity and authenticity even while insisting that authority, and even patriarchal authority, must be legitimate and reasonable rather than power by any means.

The four sites in the study work together to show aesthetic authority present in settings, practices and relations differently located in terms public and private, formal and informal, and official and popular, as well as in terms of ethnicity, religion, age, class and gender. The image that remains projects a panoramic view of how law operates through domination, taken for granted habitus and self-regulation. Lore darts and disappears among these with its own chameleon-like effects.
Chapter Seven: Governance

7.1 Introduction

When I first met Sandy, she was living with her common law partner Boscoe. They had informally adopted Brendon, their neighbour’s baby. Boscoe often got jobs with the URP because his uncle worked with the programme. Sandy was able to access relief employment less regularly, but sometimes worked informally with CEPEP when her aunt or sister, who were employed with the programme, fell ill. Sandy and Boscoe wanted to ‘build up’ their one room house on the Railway Line and get regular income because they now had a “son”. They were able to survive before on temporary employment and hustling some fish from friends on the Wharf. However, CEPEP, URP and the contacts they had with these programmes now became crucial. Their relations with neighbours, and Sandy’s sister, mother and aunt on the Railway Line, were also important as everyone often helped to feed or look after Brendon.

Brendon didn’t only alter Sandy and Boscoe’s relationship and create a new experience of parenting. He also became infused with their connection to extended family and neighbours, fishermen on the Wharf, political activists, elections and state programmes providing work and welfare. Sociality took on renewed significance in
this couple’s relation to legality, nationalism, enfranchisement and patronage. It shaped Sandy’s desire to create a more permanent home on the Wharf even though its illegality would mean that she couldn’t access pipe-borne water or electricity. Her desire for a family, a home, wages and adequate food was also part of her larger attempt to concretise a feeling of belonging to banal aspects of Trinidadian family life. In these ways, sociality connected to CEPEP, URP and her dependence on government provision.

When I last visited Sandy, she and Brendon were by her mother who was talking about getting him to participate in Kiddie’s Carnival just as her grandchildren did, often in costumes paid for with CEPEP and URP wages. Boscoe and Sandy had broken up and so their different degrees of engagement with family, neighbours, politics and the state had shifted once again. Amidst these new circumstances, Sandy was trying to make ends meet and still dreamed of expanding her single room overlooking the sea.

7.2 Conceptualising Governance in Trinidad

Reflecting on stories such as Sandy’s, this study was concerned with the relationships, values and actions that mattered most to women and men. It then examined how these informed their participation in public life. I took this approach because for Sandy, like so many others, political participation was not necessarily different from the overall configuration of values, relationships and ways of getting by that women and men engage. Often, their degree of engagement came either through fortuitous connections or, as with Sandy, was the by-product of their desire for a different kind of relationship. In this case, it was Sandy’s willingness to adopt and love Brendon. It also seemed consistent with the dominant ethos of ethnographically informed anthropology to have the degree to which things mattered to informants as one of the criteria by which they were determined to matter to the study.

From such starting points, I looked at the ways women and men managed and engaged with others, ideas, things, spaces, processes, institutions and habits. Finally, as part of exploring the political implications of informality, this study sought to
understand the different ways that they participated in, experienced and negotiated different forms of authority. These themes of participation and authority illuminated often-overlooked aspects of public life that characterize politics and governance in Trinidad.

I emphasised public life because I was interested in the ways that women and men “privatized public space” or tenaciously insinuated their own styles of action on the “external order of the city” (de Certeau 1998, 9-13). I also showed how private spheres are made more public by state intervention or even gender relations. Through their social practices of resistance and appropriation, ordinary women and men gave meaning to city streets, sidewalk interactions, local government meetings and places where anyone could potentially gather.

The market, mas camp, masjid and squatting community featured in earlier chapters were ideal for delving into the intersections of private and public lives and spaces. These sites were simultaneously intimate and publicly accessible. Additionally, the Railway Line exposed public programmes that operated through private networks. The masjid showed how privatized arenas could nonetheless be gendered publics. Family settings, such as the mas camp, were marked by stranger sociability, and the pavement leading to the market revealed public pathways that were ritually privatised. The spheres and meanings associated with notions of public and private were not static. Habits and routines developed by those most familiar with each setting shaped the space and the experience of more transient participants. Such ways of doing things extended even wider, creating the commonly traversed city space under study.

Each site was a different kind of catchment paralleling and flowing through the larger city, like a play within a play. This approach meant that in common with material culture studies, the sites themselves, their architectures, spaces and forms were included as parts of that authority normally reduced to the differential power and agencies of the persons within them. For example, an imam’s authority isn’t necessary for people to feel that certain behaviours are inappropriate within the masjid, and even the police know that a market works through its generation of a atmosphere that thrives on informal negotiation.
Rather than bounding these settings within "civil society", I defined them in terms of connections that created continuity between social life and the state. In this view, the state was only one public among many that often thoroughly intersected each other, marking the interactions of an expansive public life (Navaro-Yashin 2002). Questions regarding authority flowed from the innumerable meeting points among different gradations of power within both social life and the state. To participate in public life was to negotiate difference, competition, cooperation, and decision-making in the most everyday of instances and even more extraordinary encounters. Knowing when to call out to a customer in the Central Market was neither marginal to nor more central than knowing how to talk to an MP about securing a community standpipe or knowing how to vote in an election.

This focus was the path toward my larger interest in understanding how politics is lived. Vendors', mas makers', squatters' and religious leaders' engagements with authority were the basis for the politics I aimed to explore. In this sense, my intention was to gain insight about what I have called a politics of authority. Over a year of ethnographic fieldwork in San Fernando, Trinidad suggested that notions of sociality and legality significantly influenced this kind of politics. Sociality was associated with everyday, privatised priorities regarding food, family, friendship and faith. Legality was somewhat differently centred in the weight associated with leadership, rules and office. In different ways, each emphasised what mattered to ordinary women and men trying to earn a living, make art, worship God, lead others or simply "live good with people" (Khan 1995).

Notions of sociality and legality influenced how women and men negotiated values and decision-making with others, resolved conflict and cooperated. Against many assumptions about why people participate in public life, each illustrated that what matters to market vendors or state officials or women is a key starting point for understanding their own ways of conceiving, creating, regulating and undermining normative order. On the one hand, it led to participation that could be voluntaristic, emotional or efficacious. On the other, it meant that women and men could unwittingly find themselves part of larger institutional forces.
Social politics and legal politics were each grounded in different spheres of informal and formal power, or lore and law. Lore described the habitual practices, relations and values of informal social life. Law signified its alternative. It included structures such as hierarchy and office, and conventions such as legislation and ways of doing things that keep women and men within specific hierarchies. Yet, as earlier chapters highlighted, most interesting were the parallels, overlaps, appropriations, mimicry and resistances that interlocked the two. These suggested that the dualistic relationship between lore and law was not mainly or only one of opposition and antagonism. Rather, like two chameleons, each darted across the other, exchanging hue, blending and appearing like one or the other in different places at the same time. Underlying this, and critiquing the idea that duality can explain Trinidadian normative life (Miller 1994), were diffused ideas about reasonableness and advantage.

These signalled the significance of contingency and context to any understanding of Trinidadian values and practices. Reasonableness was an unstable notion comprising shifting degrees of empathy, self-interest, fairness, autonomy and commonsense. Advantage described the potential for and negative connotations of excess. It encircled, blurred and stretched the edges of what was habitually accepted, but also clearly defined its outer limits. The authority of conceptions of reasonableness and excess emerged most palpably from informal social life or lore. In contrast, law seemed to stand for the entrenchment of standardized rules about what was acceptable. Despite this appearance, practices that reflected norms of reasonableness and advantage mingled in both spheres with a variety of other ways of doing things. This further underscored the continuum, complementarity and even similarities between two just as it confirmed much writing about a similar relationship between social life and the state.

Negotiation of sociality, legality and authority, notions of lore and law, and conceptions of reasonableness and advantage therefore formed the conceptual framework for this ethnography of politics. It outlined a way of thinking about how women and men participate in spaces saturated with different kinds of authority, and how they legitimized their practices. This included looking at how vendors and police enforce legislation, how party activists and squatters depend on patronage, how women and men participate in associational life, and how both mas makers and local
governmental officials compete to lead a national event. In each instance, and comparing them, I delved into what individuals or groups thought made sense or mattered and what kinds of authority weighed in on the moment. The overall effect illuminated the continuities between what is often cast as ‘political’ or ‘non-political’.

As earlier chapters illustrated, only an ethnographic approach could have netted the nuances and navigations of everyday life in the market, mas camp or other settings. The ‘everyday’ includes both informal and formal ways of doing things. Ethnography best captures how interstices between the two are lived because it is a mode of knowing that privileges experience. Attention to mainly documents and interviews would not have encountered lore in the spaces of popular morality where it is lived. The study’s research themes emphasised participation, experience, relationship and negotiation. These required a methodology that could capture the spontaneous, imaginative and habitual, and privilege taken-for-granted practices, rather than well-considered justifications. Ethnography, therefore, best suited situated and thick description of political ideals as they are conceptualised through practice.

Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of “habitus” provided scaffolding that could support ethnography of the everyday, as well as the connections among different sites. It refers to the implicit value system that informs women and men’s decisions. “Dispositions” or the dominant and enduring beliefs and practices of a group are at its heart. People internalize these beliefs and then externalise them in their practices and choices. Social conditions may limit women and men’s choices and agency or they may make decisions that reflect divergent norms. Here, habitus therefore comprises layers of coherent and contradictory norms, and is dynamically engaged by the choices women and men make in their lived practice. Examining these practices means taking dispositions, social relations and the distinctive powers they create into account. I used this notion of habitually practiced knowledge to understand women and men’s “art of coexisting” (de Certeau 1984) in public life. It acknowledged the correspondences or homologies that exist across practices within individuals’ lives, informal and formal spheres, and the groups in the study.

The dispositions of imams, vendors, mas makers and squatters created an “aesthetic” (Miller 2006) of governance in Trinidad. This provides a complement to Bourdieu in

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as much as ethnographic attention to particular and individual lives alerts one to the degree that a habitus coalesces around an individual’s socialisation and disposition, which is not quite the same as the larger social dispositions. This is why the preceding chapters showed logic among diverse areas of public life and gradations of social engagement. Across groups and spheres, individuals used this “cosmological architecture” (ibid, 23) to legitimize their practices and the ways they made sense of rules, needs, emotions and relationships. An aesthetic authority, based on the importance of forging, maintaining and conducting relationships, therefore defined the governance practices illustrated in this study. It was mobilised by women and men negotiating efficacy, leadership, legitimacy, reciprocity, belonging, commonsense, reasonableness, personal style and ‘correct’ practice. It highlighted how authority springs from sources as diverse as emotions, personal style or charisma, bureaucracy, artistry and gender.

Traced back, this study examined the relationship between lore and law and, at another tier, a social and legal politics. I explored the values, practices and negotiations associated with sociality, and the dispositions that articulated them. These dispositions reached across and engaged ideas connected to legality as well. Then, I looked at the interaction between these two kinds of politics. They created habitual and homologous ways of expressing, participating in and negotiating authority. This politics of authority was defined by values of reasonableness and advantage that women and men referred to when legitimizing their practices, relationships, ideals and ways of making sense of the world. Overall, such styles of legitimization pointed to an aesthetic that normatively ordered overlapping individual, social and state-centred ways of doing things. Aesthetic authority was, therefore, the basis for my approach to everyday, lived aspects of governance in Trinidad.
Correspondingly, the key sites of the study allowed a pedestrian and participant’s view of lived politics. San Fernando Central Market vendors selling just in front and along Mucurapo Street actively renegotiated legality and illegality every “market day”. Over eight months, I stood with them as they illegally displayed the last of their perishable goods on the side of the road, and ran a brisk after-market trade selling cheaply to passers-by. Almost inevitably, City Police would arrive to clear them off the road. A range of negotiations would then ensue as vendors tried to justify themselves, continue selling or explain what they considered a fair compromise while packing up their vegetables and ground provisions.

After the police left, many would unpack and quicken their ‘hustle’ of goods in case police returned. While I attended to these interactions, I first delved into the market itself to understand how vendors related to each other and to market vending. I found that market life idealised the idea that everybody have to eat. This meant that everyone had a right to a livelihood that would enable them to meet their own and family needs. Further, everyone had a responsibility to share potential profits or to not take away anyone else’s “dollar” leaving them with nothing to take home. This value was then packed and unpacked, along with peppers, lettuce and pumpkin, on the road.
Moving a few hundred feet further, community leaders in the San Fernando Jama Masjid constantly discussed and organised around questions of spirituality, gender and democracy. This particularly happens at extraordinary moments such as a national-level associational election. Over eight weeks of observing a masjid-led campaign and in the months of contact I had with masjid members, men and women debated and strategised about issues of enfranchisement and leadership. At times, men from the jamaat feared the association's national leadership would disenfranchise them. At other times, the issue was one of fairly conducted elections. One woman circulated a petition for women's right to attend and vote in the election. Other women feared they would be shamed for trying to attend or thought that voting should be left to men.

Everyone talked about what they considered to be Islamic leadership qualities, and the relationship between authority vested in the association's constitutional head versus its spiritual head. Additionally, there was no clear consensus about women's 'correct' participation in a variety of executive roles. Opinions differed by gender and generation as well as within gender and generational groups, and among members of different jamaats and Islamic associations. The election catalysed many different views about the connection between spirituality and enfranchisement. Return to spirituality emerged as key ideal, but with unexpectedly heterogeneous meanings. Although it sent a clear message affirming the association's highest values, what it meant in practice and in electoral politics surprised and confused the masjid's campaigners.

Just around the corner, on Sutton Street, Carnival costumes were being made almost year round by friends and family in the Lionel Jagessar and Associates mas camp. For close to thirty years, bandleaders Lionel and Rose produced 'authentic' and 'fancy' Indian mas costumes that stylize North American Native "Indian" nations' dress, leadership, ancestry and cosmology. Their artistry continually reimagined and revitalised a connection to a Native American identity and spirituality within Trinidad's Carnival. The camp relied on friends' and family members' freely-given time and skill to make costumes for the band. In exchange, they got food, and free or cheaper costumes. While the most skilled might be waged, the majority supported the
band through late nights and long days of work because of a loyalty to Rose and Lionel, Carnival and mas, Indian mas, San Fernando and Trinidad. For the Jagessars, the band was a labour of love that affirmed their cultural leadership, authority and autonomy while providing an income.

Working at the camp for the five weeks preceding Carnival and in conversations with the Jagessar family over the next months, I saw how the ideal love for mas explained this medley of emotions and practice. Like bandleaders, the San Fernando Carnival Committee makes yearly attempts to harness, define and direct this love. Aiming to appropriate ultimate leadership of the event, this local government branch flexed its own legislated power in contested meetings about the management, development and purpose of Carnival. While debate and disagreement pivoted on routes, prizes and rules, it was really about the relationship between ideas of state and nation. On the one hand, love for mas nationalistically brought the two together. On the other, it provided the very reason mas makers could resist state domination, and separate state from nation.

Going further south, squatters living near the edge of the sea helped their extended family and neighbours survive by sharing the fish, groceries and networks they may have. Each week the majority joined their CEPEP or URP team clearing roadsides and drains. Although only the first is permanent employment, women and men living along the King’s Wharf Railway Line relied on these relief programmes. Securing a place in one often meant knowing influential members of the party in power and proving loyalty to the party. This was the value of having contacts.

Daily life involved continuously and strategically cultivating good relationships or connections with well-placed women and men who could help. The cleaner and secretary in the party’s constituency office, middle-ranking party activists, local government Councillors, the MP, URP foremen or CEPEP bosses were all ideal. If necessary, maintaining these useful contacts meant going to political rallies, joining a party group, participating in campaigning, voting, wearing the party’s T-shirt or volunteering for any kind of activity, including a lime with other workers. It even involved such public support for one party while voting for another. Alternately, squatters became workers who became party activists or became party activists who
became workers. This was a ‘hustle’ to play belonging publicly and strategically. During the year I spent with CEPEP and URP workers living on the Railway Line, they highlighted just how much patronage determines women and men’s participation in party politics, even when this is denied. Having contacts was at the heart of how these workers made their vote work for them as it did for those winning power.

These economic, cultural, religious and residential catchments did not only confirm that the concepts everybody have to eat, love for mas, return to spirituality and contacts were bases for authority. They also illuminated how ideals regarding legality, enfranchisement, leadership, patronage and nationalism were lived and legitimized. I brought these perspectives to my reading of the wider literature on these themes. Pointing to the importance of engaging livelihood, emotion, spirituality, artistry, family and gender in a study of politics, these San Fernandians’ practices also suggested possible conclusions about citizenship and governance. These dispositions typified how mundane practices blur formal and informal authority. They highlighted constant assertions of formal authority, continuously created and refined expressions of informal authority, and negotiation over legitimate practice. In these ways, they exemplified the study’s central themes.

Across sites, everybody have to eat epitomised social politics. It signified its highest form. To some extent, everybody have to eat was relevant in all the study’s sites. In the market, mas camp and Railway Line, informal practices defined by a concern with livelihood and survival, family well-being, tolerance, sharing with others and “living good with people” gave life to this ideal. Amongst market vendors, money had its own value because it enabled them to run a business, buy a car or just have money for beer, but it was really family and even being ‘like family’ that presented a higher authority than law.

Social politics was also expressed in CEPEP workers buying discounted vegetables on their way home, imams seeking higher stipends, vendors’ appeals for easier treatment from police and mas makers’ demands for higher prizes. Everybody have to eat was an underlying value connecting vendors, bandleaders, masjid leaders and government workers despite their different livelihoods, relations amongst themselves and relations with the state. However, what stood out most was the ways this ideal
morphed and moved through different sites and concerns, playing different functions and taking on new meanings.

The ideals return to spirituality, love for mas and contacts emerged as homologies that encompassed and extended everybody have to eat. They further intertwined it with leadership, legality, elections, government and nationalism. Return to spirituality took on vastly different, transnational meanings in the masjid and mas camp. However, in both instances, concerns with identity, survival, family and friendship were not far away. Love for mas similarly placed business and leadership in the context of cooperation and emotional connection to family, friends, art, culture and nation. Contacts most forcefully interjected these concerns into government practice, showing the opaque zone where what seems reasonable for some may expand into advantage of others.

The homologies extended to consumption and production as well as sacred and democratic practices. In the market, economic relations were indistinguishable from social relations. Those on the wharf strategically turned social relations into political ones. In the mas camp, notions of spirituality informed economic relations. Mosque leadership involved turning political relations into spiritual ones. These sites showed the sociality of consumption and production as well as the ways that sociality is consumed by and made sacred through political relations. This was how habitus was lived as a dynamic “externalisation of internalities” (Bourdieu 1990).

All these dispositions engaged social politics with legal politics, and affected how rules, leadership and office were lived. Roadside negotiations showed how informality, and even illegality, shaped City Police’s role in governance. Reciprocally, respect for the police and law, and self-regulation were part of vendors’ own practices. Although ASJA members negatively associated participation in public space with corruption and bacchanal, San Fernando Central Market vendors connected it to opportunities for family, livelihood and sociality, and the potential for greater morality. They crowded roadsides in order to govern them, along with police, by values they consider more transcendent than law.
While everybody have to eat almost wholly expressed social politics, return to spirituality was also grounded in legal politics. Partly, authority came from religious codes and bureaucratic rules. Contestation therefore centred around the power of male ASJA leadership to interpret, define and decide. In both instances, these bases for order were more directly meaningful than the abstract virtues associated with taxpayers, citizens and business people.

Although mas camp life was similarly grounded in social politics, contestations over legitimate leadership challenged the jurisdiction of the Carnival Committee, its legislated authority, executive, and governing functions. Yet, like market vendors who reproduced formal authority, bandleaders continued to compete for prizes in state competitions. Railway Line residents especially sought to integrate sociality into the practices of political activists and elected politicians throughout the hierarchy of state bureaucracy. Contacts, therefore, also highlighted the importance of office. These homologous values were all concerned with leadership and therefore also engaged ideals grounded in legal politics.

These values underscored the “privatisation” of public roadsides, meetings, elections and bureaucracies. They identified ways ordinary women and men sought to make what most mattered to them shape their experience of governance. Each disposition showed different ways that sociality and legality infuse each other. Roadside vending actually marked a shoreline where the outer edges of the two overlapped and blurred, although they remained distinct.

While vendors and bandleaders sought to establish a space of informal authority, masjid leaders battled over the ‘correct’ interlock between formal leadership and informality. Campaigners aimed to sync AJSA governance to legal politics. Conversely, Railway Line residents instead hoped social politics would determine the practice of formal power. Such politics of authority created a continuum among state, associational, informally organised and spontaneous negotiations over authority.

Love for mas grounded leadership entirely in informal practice and meanings. Bandleaders’ negotiations with the San Fernando Carnival Committee, therefore, stretched legality to take on more everyday meanings. This is why the committee kept
trying unsuccessfully to claim authority over love for mas, how it should be practiced and what it meant. It needed to command both formal and informal politics. The committee participated in and invoked informality very differently from police, who had more empathetic reasons. In the end, it often resorted to relying on legal domination and the force it afforded. In this way, the committee also set its own boundaries on bandleaders.

Contacts had the opposite effect. Mas makers set boundaries on legality even while accepting patronage. CEPEP and URP workers highlighted the extent to which contacts infiltrated political leadership and office. Along the Railway Line, residents clearly needed to interlock social and legal politics of for basic things like a job, amenities and groceries. Political leaders also appropriated it to claim and mobilise a politics of legality. They needed women and men’s votes to win the election. This is why contacts worked, both on the Railway Line and in the ASJA election.

In that election, return to spirituality expressed aspects of sociality, but was specifically used to claim and mobilise legal politics. This is why negotiations focused on questions of ‘correct’ Islamic business, leadership, electoral and gender practice, and referred to the ASJA Constitution, the Qur’an, Sunnah and Surahs. Even concerns about male and female honour played out in terms of these legalities. Yet, ironically, the ASJA election was won on the basis of friendship, family ties, concerns about (imams’) livelihood, and the idea that all jamaats would benefit. Hopes for a new PA system for a masjid or larger stipends to imams invested sociality with spiritual relevance. A successful leader ultimately needed to combine formal and informal bases for leadership. Islamic codes continued to affirm sociality’s spiritual significance, and to control women and men’s organisational roles. The ASJA executive skilfully combined constitutional and Islamic authority with social politics, and won.

As these examples showed, politics involved establishing, patrolling, blurring and dissolving the boundaries among different kinds of authority. If state actors’, associational heads’ and informal leaders’ participation in sociality was considered reasonable, it had great legitimacy. This explains the connections among ordinary people such as market vendors and others such as police, mas camp leaders,
politicians and the incumbent ASJA executive. If their participation was not considered reasonable, sociality was used to highlight the limited legitimacy of legal politics. This was why neither the San Fernando Carnival Committee nor the masjid-led campaign team successfully and legitimately dominated.

Notions of reasonableness were constitutive of these chameleon-like effects. Relatedly, advantage marked the borders of legitimate practice. Ideas about hustling, "how you talk to people", pollution (haram) and corruption continued to connect a politics of authority to normative order. Yet, depending on the time of day, degree of need or competition involved, there were moments in each site when advantage might be widely and legitimately practiced. These were contexts when some sort of accepted hustle meant that some got while some did not get at all. Contacts especially enabled this. While encompassing everybody have to eat, this disposition most opposed it at the same time.

Across chapters, informal social life underscored the kinds of politics that expressed what mattered most. Social politics emerged from this sphere of lore. Four dispositions articulated its central concerns. In the context of everyday life, they comprised a habitus. The enduring values of this habitus included self-interest and survival, empathy, reciprocity, relationship and cooperation, reasonableness and common sense. Legal politics articulated those priorities embedded in more formalised spheres and practices.

Together, these shaped the spectrum of ways that informal and institutionalised norms were combined. Law was represented by low-level police officers, political party activists at all levels, high ranking associational leaders and elected politicians. However, everyone from squatters to imams to the Member of Parliament for San Fernando West were involved in interpreting and negotiating the meanings and practice of legality. Such actions suggest that the ‘otherness’ of official ideologies, associated with law, often fire up public deliberation and become kneaded into the formation of more consensual lore. Yet, structures and conventions also continued to limit women and men within specific goals, places and constraints.
Rather than ethnic groups or the state or elites, it is dispositions that were most constitutive of these negotiations. This is why they could illuminate the correspondences and continuum that comprise governance of public life. In fact, a mas camp is much more like a market vending than expected and participating in masjid life seems not so removed from experiences living on the Railway Line. This angles a different lens to politics in Trinidad. It illustrates the power of an aesthetic order encompassing both social life and the state.

7.4 Asserting Authority

A politics of authority that stretches from close-knit to associational and community spaces and into the state clearly invites rethinking of the “boundaries between centre and periphery, public and private, legal and illegal” (Das and Poole 2004, 4). Women and men in this study mobilised concepts embedded in lore to work out their needs, values and relationships. They also appropriated concepts underlying law in ways that made sense to them. They creatively chose ideas from lore or law and gave them a
variety of meanings. For example, market vendors interpreted legislation governing public space in ways that legitimized their obviously illegal practices.

Analogously, *masjid*-based campaigners marshalled ideas about enfranchisement and democracy, and gave it their own gendered twist. Ultimately, this enabled them maintain a transcendent (Miller 1994) sphere, unsullied by politics or competing patriarchies (Mohammed 1994). It also enabled them to reinterpret citizenship in transnational terms. Rather than being valued or practiced for its own sake, democracy provided a basis for patronage, leadership and gender, and, therefore, for spirituality. This is why the election pivoted on a battle over the meanings of *return to spirituality*, and raised contentions about corruption, headmanship, and male protection of Islamic, women’s and the community’s honour from non-Islamic spheres of civil and social life. It contained the potential beauty of uncorrupted relations with money, God and people.

Enfranchisement is therefore valued for its ability to mark configurations of public and private. In the *masjid*, family marks a sphere that should remain detached from election practices. Democracy is idealised, but only when it furthers goodness, justice, fairness, God and ‘tradition’. Its dangers are impurity, fear and confusion. This explains why non-participation is also an ideal. Both ideals of participation and non-participation create publics and continuums of authority. Together, these create and revitalize ethnicity, gender and other bases for order within the ASJA’s Islamic cosmology. While on the one hand there are attempts to limit the sphere of politics, negotiations over enfranchisement also attempt to create an Islamic basis for politics. This is why *return to spirituality* intertwines Islam and democracy while entrenching the gendered relations that enable one to remain uncorrupted by the other.

Women’s non-participation in general ASJA elections is not the only instance of non-participation. In San Fernando Carnival Committee meetings, discontent could be resolved by enabling mas makers to vote on decisions. However, key to that “consultative” (rather than democratic) process is that mas makers don’t have unlimited or formalized say. As Valverde (2003, 216) observes in Chile, participatory governance “can become an application of the techniques of discipline...where an attempt is made to mould and shape a habitus of citizenship” that does not overwhelm
the system or challenge the status quo. Winning general elections is also about especially encouraging some voters rather than others to turn up at the polls. Yet, on the Railway Line, non-participation can never be an ideal even if frustration with unfulfilled promises stops people from voting.

For Railway Line residents, it is precisely concerns grounded in family life that are the basis for the exchange of votes and jobs so central to patronage. Enfranchisement, coupled with patronage, secures the chance of feeling Trinidadian. Participation on the basis of love for mas aims for similar feeling. On the Line, it means being able to have money to contribute to "a cook" among workers or for food for an elderly neighbour's welfare or for a lime at the end of a fortnight's work. CEPEP and URP workers valued their participation in national elections because it helped them access those aspects of saving, consumption and helping others that many take for granted.

This community interpreted citizenship in banal terms (Billig 1995). They defined it as being able to pay a taxi to take their children to school, pay for a Kiddie's Carnival costume, have a bankcard or buy a new pair of jeans. They could be part of everyday normative life including the exemplary red beans, macaroni pie, chicken, iced drinks and radio music (here playing from a recharged car battery) typical of Trinidadian 'Sunday lunch'. These markers of belonging rely on patronage, and party leaders' ability to deliver welfare benefits, and improve the quality of life for those most in need and least represented. Participating in elections is about being able to be one of those able to 'eat' in its widest sense. As Carlene Edie (1989, 10) observed for Jamaica, "politics revolves around the job".

Patronage occurs across sites in a variety of forms. It is affiliated with paternalism, election canvassing, food, jerseys, travel, getting your child a place in a school, helping mosques and communities, getting people to support who you support, looking good, giving prizes and rewards, subduing protest and crime, and fears of losing power. It is symbolized by money and its authority. It may, therefore, legitimize leadership, and compete with 'tradition', bureaucracy, spirituality and constitutional power, because it creates and feeds relationships. When bureaucracy becomes so personalized, it is may be good for Railway Line residents, but not mas
leaders. The power of money may enable bureaucracies to compete with those whose authority is based on artistry and culture.

In the ASJA, patronage expanded the range of possible paths to spirituality. This was its importance in the election. It highlighted that material needs are still a part of a spiritual or cultural orientation. Sometimes, even transcendent appeals cannot secure cooperation like money can, and the two must combine. This may involve making political parties respond to Railway Line residents' needs, making ASJA leadership promise to raise the stipend for imams or letting the Carnival Committee know that their decisions have to make sense to bandleaders if they want their cooperation. Patronage may help those participating to gain status, meet their needs and tighten complementary obligations, but it doesn’t necessarily build trust. This is why those in the masjid and on the Line associate it with hustling. To benefit, one must strategically maneuver hopes, choices and loyalties through both formal and informal relations.

Voting and canvassing becomes another expression of a wider, everyday hustle to survive, share and feel, as Railway Line residents told me, "like here is a part of the world". Such means of participating are valued because they build relationships of all kinds and assert the rights that should accompany them. Nonetheless, the ideas about democracy they mobilised reinforced gendered notions of the state as a paternalist provider and patron. On this point, Edie (1989) has also noted how patronage programmes “restore manhood” to less influential Members of Parliament. As on the Railway Line, enfranchisement enabled some Muslim women and men to challenge top-down leadership, just as it enabled top-down leadership to occur. These examples suggest how Trinidadian practices may appropriate the forms and meanings of democracy when asserting and defining belonging, rights, responsibilities and status on other terms.

For mas makers, Carnival is, like Sunday lunch, something that connects you to everybody. The Jagessars and other bandleaders interpreted citizenship in terms of informal nationalism (Eriksen 1992). For them, it was connected to getting help from friends and neighbours, coming together to look good and have fun, making art and representing Trinidadian culture. Participation enabled them to produce, enjoy, save
and share. Like masjid leaders, it also encouraged them to invest citizenship with ideas about leadership and, particularly, headmanship.

Like participating in an associational election, making an Indian mas band created feelings of belonging to transnational, informal and gendered discourses. All three buttressed mas makers’ attempts to present competing patriarchal leadership. Mas makers took notions of nationalism and gave them new meanings that were highly critical of bureaucracy and law. Even here, patronage played a powerful role in ordering relations among people and leaders, and along hierarchies of power. It provided a route to spirituality, family and art. Yet, mas makers played it very differently from masjid leaders and squatters, emphasising the connection between what most matters to people and political action.

Both mas makers and masjid members identify with the ‘past’, leadership, cooperation, autonomy, culture and community, family, friendship, connection with others and deep emotional commitment to practice. They each mobilize discourses of equality, but in different ways. Both are involved with questions of who leads and who defines legitimacy. Attempts to limit political control of mas makers’ livelihood therefore don’t seem so different from ones to separate politics from God. Whereas ASJA members may denote specific meanings of public space in order to protect God from politics, mas makers create other meanings to lift culture higher than politics and enable it to transcend state domination.

Both groups repudiate obligations based on patronage and state funding, and manage reciprocity on the basis of the separation of state and nation. In fact, while state officials may attempt to appropriate love for mas to bolster state legitimacy, the state gets more legitimacy from not attempting to appropriate authority within Islamic spheres. What is fascinating is that way that discourses about multiracial harmony, so intrinsic to the mas camp, also explain the autonomy of the masjid. Each legitimately brings ‘difference’ to the nation, tempered with ideals of “living good with people” (Khan 1995). For mas makers, Carnival has about as much to do with ‘correct’ practice as elections do for those in the masjid.
Yuval-Davis (1997, 4) suggests understanding the notion of ‘the nation’ in terms of “nationalist ideologies and movements on the one hand and the institutions of the state on the other”. To understand transnational, banal, informal and gendered aspects of nationalism in Trinidad, one would have to look at the struggles between different kinds of formal and informal authority to define the informal sphere. Eriksen’s (1992) conceptualization of “dual nationalisms” provides a useful framework for understanding these takes on citizenship or belonging. Formal nationalism emerges from the demands of the modern nation-state. Informal nationalism, which is based in civil society, is identified in collective events that evoke shared emotions and bodily experiences among otherwise disparate groups (ibid, 141).

Writing of Trinidad and Mauritius, Erikson argues that state nationalisms are poorly institutionalized in these countries’ civil societies. Nationhood and nationality belong, in domestic discourses, to the sphere for ideology, not doxa. There is fierce contestation over their meanings (ibid, 143). There is, in fact, “tension” between state-centred formal nationalism and the informal nationalism of civil society (ibid, 147). Erikson compares festivals such as Divali and Carnival to Independence Day in Trinidad. These informal festivals have “firm roots in the immediate experiences of people” (ibid. 151). They, therefore, more easily produce shared meanings.

Whereas these festivals create affinities, and shared practices and spaces among diverse groups, the identity presented by the formal institutions of the state does not. Rather, its ideology “is not credible and therefore impotent” (ibid, 147). While “the normative pressure between the moral systems is mutual”, Eriksen writes, “proletarian (informal) values remain remarkably strong in daily practices and discourse in the contemporary Trinidadian class society” (ibid, 147).

Yet, informal nationalism may not necessarily contradict its state-centred counterpart. Erikson also points out that neither form of nationalism is less authentic than the other, nor less efficient at integrating individuals ideologically. However, formal nationalism must make appeals that aim larger than the state and its symbols. It must appeal also to livelihood, safety, neighbourhood/basic concerns and ambiguous or “multi-vocal” meanings (ibid, 159). Even in these instances, “the nationalist ethos of
civil society is by no means a hostage of state ideology or values relating to capitalism” (ibid, 156).

As I show, neither is it overdetermined by ethnic, class or gender differences. Occupation, income and the status they afford as well as ethnic identities based on notions of ‘race’ and religion clearly nuance how women and men experience, claim, resist and twist aesthetic authority. As Rhoda Reddock (1995, 21) has written, “…in creole Trinidad and Tobago, the symbols of national culture and national identity emerged from a struggle over representation and citizenship of specific classes, genders and ethnic groups”. This is part of the “continuous “play” of history, culture and power” (Hall 1990, 225).

For example, some groups contest Carnival’s status as “national” culture. Indo-Trinidadians, and particularly Hindus, have led this assertion. Afrocentrists have also argued that Carnival is an African, not Trinidadian, festival. Much scholarship has critiqued these essentialist perspectives (Traube 1996, Allahar 1998, Ho 2000). Instead, Carnival has been theorized as historically symbolizing “the constructs and confines of division and nationalism inherent in Trinidad as a nation” (Allahar and Zavitz 2002, 136). Rather than simply mirroring Africans’ experience, it has reflected the changing structures, multi-ethnic social relations, and political and economic conditions of colonial history. As Reddock (1995, 21) puts it, “Through a continuous struggle and contestation, the authenticity of these symbols is being challenged by other groups and in the process are being transformed”.

The Jagessars’ clearly cherish and reproduce a religious and ethnic identity. Wendy Kalicharan, of the Kalicharans’ mas camp, also proudly claims to be the only Indo-Trinidadian woman to win the national Carnival Queen title and her son to be the only Indo-Trinidadian to win the national King title. As Burton Sankeralli (1998, 207) has commented, “Previously, Indian participation in Carnival took place within the Creole framework. Indians participated but were alienated from the Carnival mainstream itself. Presently...Indians are claiming Carnival space as Indians”. Yet, identities are not the only basis for their participation and feelings of belonging.
Previous discussions of love for mas show how the Jagessars also claim citizenship to the nation on the basis of their expert artistry, popular leadership, identification with Native American cosmology, neighbourly relations, respect among peers, and desires for both pleasure and business. Similarly, the meanings and practices associated with Islamic identity are not static and, certainly, not always obvious as the limited success of the campaign slogan, return to spirituality, indicated to masjid campaign leaders.

The contents of different ethnic groups, such as shared ‘race’, history, culture, language, religion and place of birth, may be important. However, as Fredrick Barth observed in the 1960s, it is the activity of boundary making and the markers of boundaries that are significant (1969, 15). While ‘racial’ and religious discourses shape the context for explorations of differential citizenship, the dispositions in this study highlight other bases for belonging, identities, sources of power, and claims on nation and state.

To understand these popular ideals and forms of participation, one would also have to consider the significance of gender to struggles over belonging. After all, ethnically defined struggles are also patriarchal ones. This is not only because they are struggles among men. Also, power, authority and the state are understood in masculine terms. Gendering nationhood and citizenship means examining how specific ideals regarding womanhood and manhood are woven with these concepts (Jayawardena 1986, Pateman 1988, Spivak and Guha 1988, Enloe 1989, Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1989, Chatterjee 1990, Kandiyoti 1991, Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992, Parker et al. 1992, Brah 1993, Chatterjee 1993.). Though they are imagined (Anderson 1983), they are experienced, organised and represented in ways that are marked by historically specific social and economic power relations (Yuval-Davis 1997, 3).

Thus, focus is also on how the women and men who are part of diverse groups have differential access to the state. As Yuval-Davis (1997, 24) describes, women’s “dual” citizenship has included them among general citizens and among those whose lives were specifically regulated. Despite claims to primordialism, discourses about citizenship are modern responses to contemporary situations. Similarly, national identities are not simply ahistorical truths, but “constituted in particular times and places through relations of power already existent in the society” (Sharp 1996, 103).
On the one hand, there are credos of democratic citizenship such as freedom and individual autonomy. On the other, there are discourses of culture and tradition, which emphasise nationalism, religiosity and family (Werbner and Yuval-Davis 1999, 1). This framing was powerfully significant. For example, although many women were involved in anti-colonial nationalist struggles, they were often excluded from public office and power after independence. Some nationalist movements also constructed ‘traditions’ and collective identities that were disempowering for women. Often, the ‘woman question’ was included in the public sphere of political contest between colonial powers and nationalist movements, but de-legitimised as a challenge to inner domains of sovereignty (Sharp 1996, 103).

Whether at a national or sub-cultural level, institutionalised patriarchies like the family, religious organisations and cultural groups consider themselves to have rightful oversight over women’s lives to ensure particular values are reproduced. Women are “confined to the world of metaphor” and to hierarchical tropes of the family in national narratives (Walter 1995, 37). They are seen as protected by “masculine agency” (Sharp 1996, 100) in the “longed-for and struggled-over sense of national identity (McDowall 1999, 200). Ethnically-defined female gender identities therefore mark specific women’s bodies as the sovereign territory of males of that group and provide some basis for the definition of masculine ethnic identity.

Reflecting on gender and democracy in the Anglophone Caribbean, Reddock (2004, 5) begins with recognition that issues of authoritarianism and patriarchal control have been intrinsic to the region’s history of political, quasi-political and inter-personal relations. Questions of nation and citizenship have been central to Caribbean social organization and social movements because of differences in power, autonomy and rights among waves of colonized and colonizing groups. Thus, her analysis examines spheres such as the workplace, the family and community spaces in addition to local and state level political systems. She concludes that gender ideologies influenced the range of ways women participated in union, welfare, nationalist, ‘racial’, religious and other movements. Women provided “a solid block of loyal support which however, was seldom translated into political office or power” (2004, 23).
Decades of women’s activism has expanded women’s inclusion as citizens and
gendered citizenship (ibid, 26-7). However, reviews over this period suggest that
mainstream (‘male-stream’) approaches to state authority, citizen rights and
Caribbean identities continue to implicitly assume the neutrality of patriarchal
masculinities (ibid, 28). As Reddock points out, while having access to political office
is a basic human right, enabling women (and men) to experience citizenship as
enabling and empowering means mobilizing beyond the formalized spheres of
parliament and local government.

In many ways, women mobilized forms of authority present in lore and law to claim
power and challenge advantage. This is particularly why social politics was so
significant. Women’s greater responsibility for food provision, family care and
markers of morality were all sources of stratification as well as registers of power in
their engagements with police, political activists and male masjid leaders.

Despite the inequities and inequalities associated with gender, the dispositions
everybody have to eat, return to spirituality and contacts enabled women to legitimize
forms of participation based on ambitions for family survival, empathy with others’
needs, feelings of success in negotiations with police, fears of spiritually incorrect
male leadership, hopes for greater associational recognition and inclusion, confidence
from managing households, friendships with politicians, love for a neighbour’s child,
and desires for independence, respect and community. They continuously
manoeuvred diverse kinds of stratification in the face of public officials and police,
male peers, economic peripheralisation, social and political hierarchy, and gendered
forms of exclusion. At the same time, men from varying groups also mobilised tactics
masculine power and meaning justified by social and legal politics.

Ideological and material relations of gender shaped notions regarding public and
private space, the sexual division of labour, sexuality, family, community and state
officials’ practices. While women and men participated in public life for similar
reasons, they nonetheless experienced normativity differently. As shown in the mas
camp and masjid, and to a lesser extent in the Railway Line and market, this had
implications for the ways they differently created and undermined order. Women and
men's engagements with participation and authority in public life and state governance were, therefore, gendered relations.

Both bureaucratic and informal power are paternalistic and patriarchal. In other words, state and society form a continuum linked through common underlying gender ideologies. Across class, religion and 'race', women managed power in ways informed by their inequitable and stratified access to sources of legitimacy. Yet, because God, emotions, family, reciprocity, culture, money and even being 'fas' enabled them to challenge advantage, the dispositions in this study also show that gender is mediated by surprising and unconventional sources of legitimate power.

Aesthetic authority therefore enabled women and men to establish the 'right' relationship amongst needs, things, people, spheres and ideals. This included the 'right' relationship between politics and God, legislation and livelihood, and patronage and obligation as well as the rights that should legitimately accompany relationship. These deliberations were not without contestation. In fact, assertions and deliberations around normativity are what characterise ordinary women and men's politics and their experience of governance of public life.

7.5 Centering Normativity

![Figure 44: Virtuosity: Combining Rules, Skill and Style](image)
Participation was not inspired by abstract civic principles, but by ideals of respectability and, often, the power of sentiment. Normative order was based on the virtues of sociality. It was also based on what felt ‘right’ or intuitively fit the values that patterned women and men’s lives, bringing a sense of balance, fair play and even beauty and pleasure. Hence, the dispositions I described asserted popular notions of what public life should be about. As Partha Chatterjee (2005, 84) described, in a “political society”, democratic politics is “a constantly shifting compromise between the normative values of modernity and the moral assertion of popular demands” (2005, 86). As women and men “bend and stretch the rules of bourgeois politics and rational bureaucracy”, they create forms of democratic practice that are unrecognisable from the names given to them by Western sociology and political theory (ibid, 100).

Practices that deliberated the ‘correct’ connection between God and elections, livelihood and legislation, reciprocity and public policy, and gender and leadership were, therefore, clearly central to the meaning and practice of citizenship. They were the overlooked stuff of politics. Women and men participated in various aspects of public life because it made sense in that moment, because it enabled them to combat immorality, assert male honour, achieve public recognition or repay debt. What they valued made illegal livelihood practices acceptable if they were considered reasonable and made sense. It made elections about whom you knew, what you could get and whom it was legitimate to exclude. It shaped an informal, imagined nationalism that could not be easily appropriated by state strategies for legitimacy. What mattered affirmed the practice of leadership as headmanship, and contested abstract civil values for governance of public space. It influenced practices of government because many officials themselves bought into these informal ideals.

In essence, what women and men considered moral ways of being informed their political action. These ideals shaped citizenship because democracy, the state and participation had meanings that reflected and were lived as effects of this normative order. Women and men mobilised the kinds of powers they offered, combined them with a range of others, and tactically slipped up and down different registers of authority. These ideals, therefore, also fundamentally contributed to the ways that inequalities, stratification and hegemony were navigated. Essentially, notions of right
and reasonable relations defined what public life was about. They defined how women and men lived ideals, and good reasons to participate in a variety of civic, associational and neighbourly interactions. This was aesthetic authority in practice.

In the Introduction, I argued that authority was a 'tactic' (de Certeau 1984) that women and men invested with meaning and power. Power could be derived from, for example, family, need, knowledge, God, gender, office, emotions or legislation. Here, I have tried to show that when exercising various forms of power and moving up and down registers of authority, women and men try to determine for themselves the forms of power and meaning, and kinds of relations and practices, that make nationalism, democracy, gender and citizenship actually matter. The ways they are lived point to the movement between 'higher' meanings situated in law and signified by legislation, bureaucracy or what is read as God's will, and those meaning saturated with lore. They also point to the significance of deliberations over legitimacy or what is allowed, efficacy or what works and leadership or who can lead.

Sometimes, different groups wanted to show that what they were doing accorded with established rules of legislation or God and principles of propriety. When specific justifications were considered 'higher' and more accepted by others, legitimacy itself could be a reason for women and men's actions, gestures and words. Other times, they were simply acting efficaciously to most easily and quickly get what they wanted or needed. In some instances, the play of virtuosity or skill provided enough rationale. Sometimes, it was simply desires to feel good or to affirm relationship. Leaders also enabled groups to connect (or not) to specific concepts based on what most mattered to them. These registers emphasised that the practice and meanings of, for example, legality, enfranchisement, patronage and nationalism, cannot be assumed. In response, ethnography provided a starting point for critique, and for showing when, to what extent and for what reasons specific citizenship ideals may be mobilised. As well, it opened an entry for thinking through ways these produce public life.
Politics in Trinidad has hardly been conceptualised this way. While this study engaged common themes of leadership, bureaucracy and elections, it looked at aspects and layers not normally emphasised. It also showed ways they are connected together "in a promiscuous hybrid of accommodation and refusal, power and parody, embodiment and alienation" (Comaroff and Comaroff 2005, 127). This study did not provide only a "view from below" (Mies 1979) and from mid-level. It showed how perspectives at different strata move, morph and shift meaning as they are expressed in different kinds of practices. As Trinidadian political analysis infrequently evaluates assessments of the society made at election periods or at governmental levels against other, non-crisis moments and non-governmental spheres, this study sought to fill this gap. This is one of the reasons it focused on the connections and overlap of formality and informality as constitutive of Trinidadian politics. It therefore moved between government and resistance without falling into the paradigms either offered.

As there is little political anthropology on Trinidad, study of Trinidadian politics has hardly been ethnographic. It has, therefore, not been seriously grounded in ordinary women and men's cosmologies, and their implications for governance at street, associational, local government and national election levels. This study is unique in this respect. I started it wondering about the feelings and ideals women and men articulate in their daily lives even as they responded to those of political leaders, parties and organized movements. My goal, therefore, was to study the ordinary practices that constitute informal politics. This is why I drew from theorizing grounded in emotions, ideals and personal relationships.

As anthropologists and feminists have long suggested, such study of manners, domestic relations, reproduction and the private sphere can evoke the organization of public life itself. As I discussed in the Introduction, the anthropology of Trinidad and Tobago has a long tradition of exploring these themes. Because of debates about pluralism and creolisation, and connectedly cultural persistence and change, anthropological writing has significantly engaged and critiqued local and regional discourses of ethnicity and nation. However, largely, this literature has not considered implications for governance in terms of associational organisation, electoral practice,
and an idea of the state. This study attempted to fill the fissure between political science and anthropology in Trinidad and Tobago.

In this sense, it complements other ethnographies of politics in the wider the Anglophone Caribbean. For these reasons, I cast a spotlight on the personal practices and ideals that point to moral codes, individual investment in society, and the ways that different groups imagine and regulate themselves and each other. In this way, I attempted to further the Caribbean literature that 'democratises' (Paley 2001) how politics is investigated and conceptualized.

Part of my approach involved delving into 'margins' where order is being constantly refounded (Das and Poole 2004, 8). These are sites that can be discursive, ideological or real. As these kinds of locations show, law and state practices can be colonized by informal forms of regulation that are grounded in values such as everybody have to eat. What I have shown is how technologies of power, situated both inside and outside of law, work to define governance. These create plural disciplinary practices that are based on a spectrum of imaginaries and drawn from official representations of justice and law as well as lived experience. However, while recent work on these themes has focused on ways that margins reinscribe the state, my questions were not just about how the state actually works.

Instead, I reflected "on how the practice and politics of life in these areas shaped the political, regulatory, and disciplinary practices" (ibid, 3) that constitute what is considered "the state", as well as other clusters of authority, ideals and ways of doing things. In this sense, I was really interested in the relationships that emerged out of what can be called 'margins' and their implications. These included relationships to different kinds of spirituality, livelihood, friends and family, leaders and decision-making, public and private spaces as well as to various levels, functions and officials that represent an idea of the state. I highlighted how 'marginal' women and men's values were not at all marginal to a politics of authority at many gradations of power. In fact, in addition to state-centred ones, there were many other disciplinary regulations that shaped how they secured survival and sought justice in the everyday.
Nonetheless, state-centred notions of "exception" provided a springboard for understanding concrete "practices that lie simultaneously outside and inside the law" (ibid, 15). For example, the police cajoling vendors to move off the road could be seen as "figures of local authority [who] represent both highly personalized forms of private power and the supposedly impersonal or neutral authority of the state" (ibid, 14). They typified the ways that margins run through the state "breaking open the solidity often attributed" to it (ibid, 20) and colonising it with other "forms of legal/juridical ideas" (ibid, 23). As Veena Das wrote of police in India, "police officers may be charged with implementing the rules and regulations of the state, but they do not cease being members of local worlds with their own customs and habits" (2005, 236).

Negotiations in carnival committee meetings and on the Railway Line provided analogous ways that bureaucracies can implement government policies, "not in accordance with rules and regulations, but in accordance with bureaucrats' reading of the wishes of their superiors" (ibid, 239). Or, the intentions of high-ranking officials may never be implemented as they planned because lower level enforcement expresses different interests and goals (Ferguson 1994). This can lead to exclusions and repressions as well as subversions and reconfigurations. As Das points out, it is in the offices of petty bureaucrats and street corners patrolled by police that "forms of governance and modes of surveillance are put into operation" (2005, 241).

The ways that ordinary women and men claim practices and ideas emanating from an idea of the state also attest to the ways its power circulates and is continually reproduced. Together, these ways of working out right and reasonable practice show "how states manage those at the margins, and also how those living in these margins navigate the gaps between laws and their implementation" (ibid, 241). As earlier chapters illustrated, concerns about survival shape "new modalities of rule" (ibid, 249).

This results in a regulatory plurality that consolidates state power while undermining state authority. For example, contrary to postcolonial elites' efforts to use nationalism to legitimize state sovereignty (Hansen and Stepputat 2005, 26), bandleaders' practices showed how they twist nationalism to legitimize their own informal
sovereignty. In this way, mas makers were like “individuals and groups who “have managed to capture, privatize or make semi-autonomous territories, institutions, identity forms, and practices in the interstices of the fragmented configuration of sovereign power in the modern city-scapes” (Hansen and Stepputat 2005, 31). Their politics could not simply be located “within the constitutional limits of the state nor in the orderly transactions of bourgeois civil society (Chatterjee 2005, 94) even if they contributed to the ways that legalities and order were produced. The same is true for political activists who were like “networks of strongmen, brokers and fixers” (Hansen 2005, 185) working in the morally ambiguous tributaries between legality, illegality and informality to secure water, jobs and groceries for Railway Line residents. Contacts, and notions that not all will get, pointed to ways that democracy creates formal sovereignties, “states of exception” and informal sovereignties.

Yet, many of the observations made about national elections, governmental bureaucracy, patronage and enforcement of legality had their parallels in AJSA members’ experiences of democracy and governance. This is why I did not define law only in terms of state sovereignty and why the state was not the “master signifier” (Hansen and Stepputat 2005, 4) of sovereignty itself. As Thomas Hansen writes of India, “…law, and an extensive system of legal regulation remained merely one of several forms of sovereignty…Adjudication within communities…local strongmen and other informal authorities were, and still remain, as important and enduring sources of authority in India as that of the modern legal form” (ibid, 23). As he later discusses, even the idea of the nation may situate it “as a moral and sovereign entity beyond, and in opposition to, the state and the political world (Hansen 2005, 180). This fits the way that the ASJA positioned itself as a “repertoire of authority” above non-Islamic publics and practices of citizenship. It also matches bandleaders’ wielding of informal nationalism against statist interpretations.

I also drew on Hansen’s understanding of sovereignty as “multiple, provisional and always contested, and of the state as an unfinished and continuous project of control and subordination” (ibid, 172). If the state is always unfinished, surely there are zones, moments and margins that are not only and ultimately about the state? Following Hansen’s considerations, and as I have shown in this study, I defined legitimate political action in terms of shifting norms that include notions of law, lore,
leadership, illegality and informality. These are different registers that provide a framework for the ways that power can be invoked, mimicked and contested in lived practices of citizenship and belonging. From this perspective, I attempted to study the state without making it the point of the study.

At any rate, the state didn't appear as a discrete, autonomous and abstract institution in the lives of those peopling this study. Nor did their idea of the state construe it as a coherent and supreme authority. In fact, just the opposite occurred. Vendors treated police as if they were vendors also needing to make their dollar. Mas makers dismissed state authority because they didn't identify as mas makers. For those on the Railway Line, almost the only authority that mattered was the ones that they knew. Meanwhile, vendors, squatters and bandleaders challenged legislative, bureaucratic and statist logic with their own. Together, observations in San Fernando strongly argue that state effects seem so diffused they can hardly be studied as state effects or prove statism.

The play of hegemonic processes, in social relations, networks and institutions as well as in banal bureaucratic practices, shaped how women and men conceptualised and lived informal politics. They emphasised the centrality of social life to any understanding of governance. Governance is part and parcel of everyday life. Rather than studying various representations of the state, therefore, I examined aspects of cosmology, practice and meaning among individuals and groups with divergent political stakes, who are mobilising and reshaping the very ideas and institutions that shape their engagements with themselves, each other, leaders, bureaucracies and bases of authority situated in and out of the state. The making and breaking of different kinds of consensus are negotiations over the cultural terms that order the world and legitimate power (Comaroff 2002).
This study has shown the role that lore plays in the ways that Trinidadians experience, participate in and negotiate authority. Crucially, lore sometimes has greater legitimacy than law. Women and men's reasons for idealising participation and authority twist, mimic, change hue and combine lore and law. The interlock of the two constitutes public life. Politics is considered to be empathetic rather than alienating and, therefore, more morally right when these two are complementary. I have illustrated how women and men's participation in public life reflects and creates normative order or what I have called aesthetic authority.

This order is premised on notions of reasonableness and advantage that flow through both social and state locations. I have shown that governance of public life cannot be understood if scholars start with received notions of governance, politics and democracy that often hide the views, ideals and actions of those selling on the street, making decisions for their masjid or taking care of a neighbour's baby. The pictures I have drawn lead away from state- and elite-centred understandings of politics and show many powerful ways that informal social life matters.
Overall, my intention in this study has been to respect the integrity of ethnography as more than an abstract text of hypothesis about general proposals of political order. Unlike in sociology, for example, the point of the work has not been to contest generalised analytic descriptions of what politics is for its own sake, but to show that a focus on this alone excludes most of the interesting observations that derive from the actual ethnographic encounter with these varied sites.

By contrast, I have tried to respect these every day encounters among women and men, and between people and situations by focusing on what facilitates and constrains the projects they embark upon to earn a living, enjoy their sociality and build their family. This is the politics they have to be concerned with and is therefore the politics that the ethnographer has to be concerned with. It is also what is most excluded when political analysis is only devoted to the formal aspects of democracy such as voting and bureaucracies. Here, they are included. However, I show how they are embodied in everyday and formal action or constant flow between lore and law.

I began this study because I wanted to know more about what ordinary women and men valued and how their values shaped political life. As Trinidad and Tobago citizen, I also wanted to contribute to national scholarship and to indigenous theorising. I therefore started by walking about, looking around and listening. Reflecting this grounded approach, the study has worked much more on its own terms such as lore and law, and its own interpretation of normative order such as between habitus and aesthetic.

I have been less respectful of the terms given in conventional political anthropology, but aimed to build from their meanings on the ground in San Fernando. My intention has been to give enough ethnographic exemplification so that study’s language is clear, consistent and justified by the originality of the consequences found through its use. By finding a language that seems closer to the understandings and experiences of the population in these four settings, I hoped to avoid squeezing them into inappropriate analytical forms that can mislead and jeopardize the integrity with which their daily lives is portrayed.
It should now be clear that the choice of the five locations was not intended to be comprehensive. There are dozens of other sites that could have been included from hospitals and sports to actual voting and courts. Nonetheless, by juxtaposing these settings, I aimed to bring out a series of general points about their differences as well as their similarities, despite apparently entirely different contexts. In the last two sections above, I have tried to illuminate the panoramic view they together offer.

Although it seems somewhat parochial, I have confined my analysis to material specific to one city within the island of Trinidad, in the larger Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. Although I have stuck close to the original data collected through my personal ethnography, it should be evident that many of the claims made are intended to be of general usage. The relationship between lore and law points to larger questions about how groups of women and men engage with each other in formal and informal settings, and the differential power and respect for normativity they bring. What is recognised as public and private, or authority and legitimacy, or the ways political power is dispersed will vary across every other potential ethnographic instance. In this light, the concept of *aesthetic authority* can be a useful tool for application in infinite other sites of analysis.

In other words in a totalitarian context on the one hand, where power tends to be asserted from above, or in a Scandinavian social democratic state where conformity tends to be asserted from below, there would be entirely different considerations than in this case in Trinidad. Nonetheless, at the level of how a market or a *masjid* might operate there would be issues on these middle grounds of people's participation and interaction that could still stand comparison with the data in this thesis.

Many elements in the analytical sections of this thesis emerge from the decision to explore the intersection between everyday social and political life. This is why I have explored the politics of authority and legitimacy through discussions of lore and law. This framework also allowed me to describe the nuanced ways that key dispositions enshrined informal rights based on lore. I showed how they could overcome law if, in conflict, they are seen as more basic. Lore provides legitimacy to claims to authority and, if sufficient, can effectively outrank law as it impinges on daily life. Still, as I have shown in police, bureaucrats, politicians and associational leaders' practices, law
is already saturated with lore and this porousness enables ideals of ‘right’ and reasonable relations to be worked out across spheres, roles, hierarchies and settings.

As I outlined in the Introduction, many studies concentrate on breakdown, conflict and power as violence, but anthropology is equally drawn to power that is in the normative. This power is not simply collective and conservative nor dispersed across generalised capillaries, but also characterised by series of counter-forces held in dynamic balance. For example, while normativity in the masjid is made clear, it is also often under contention because of shifts in gender politics. Normativity should be situated within the tension of lore and law, and reasonableness and advantage, and the dynamic ways that legitimacy is asserted, resisted, twisted and imagined. Similarly, it is useful to keep in mind that resistance practices also contain desires for respectability and vice versa.

What I have tried to show here is the ordinary ways that Trinidadians attempt to establish order and understanding amidst stratification, ‘difference’ and a range of vulnerabilities. They do this by validating “proletarian” (Best 2001) conceptions of state and nation, and by asserting ownership of, rather than just belonging to, spaces, groups, things and ideas. Transcendent ideals regarding family, culture, God and community underscore their actions even as they maneuver the vagarities of daily life and relationships, the demands of survival and changes brought on by global- and national-level forces. In this context, when normativity remains true to changes in the world it operates in, it gains rather than loses authority by ability to remain in step with individual, national and even generational changes, large and small.

Figure 46: Growing Up at the Shore of Unfolding City Life
INTERVIEWS

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