Being Said/Seen to Care:

Masculine Silences and Emerging Visibilities of Intimate Fatherhood in Dominica, Lesser Antilles.

# Introduction

The core of the father's role is to support the child financially and not to be close to him [or her] emotionally.

(Rodman, 1971, p.88)

‘We have a problem here in Dominica, our men doh like to take care of deir chilren’, declared a-single mother in her 40s during my first month of ethnographic fieldwork. Similar statements recurred routinely. One such declaration from a mother in a hair salon prompted a conversation: ‘But what about all the fathers I see picking up their children from school, walking them home together? So, they doh’ care about their children then?!’’, I asked (in the rhetorically contentious way Dominicans often pose questions). I was thinking of men I regularly sighted in public caring for their children. She paused, appearing confused. ‘Care, like *check* their chil’ren, nuh!’, she irritably reiterated. ‘Checking’ meaning to materially provide – the normative province of Caribbean fatherhood. Upon reflection, we were transacting two divergent models of fatherly care: hers the longstanding hegemonic concept of *provision as care*; mine an imported, though increasingly localised notion of *care as demonstrative everyday practice*. Throughout my time in Dominica I would notice a marked chasm between these competing ideals and perceptions of men’s fulfilment of them.

In this chapter I explore the dissonant discursive construction of paternal care in Dominica. I examine how fathers speak about and perform care in various ways. How concepts of care as provision and emotional labour are in everyday circulation on the island, though, each is variously verbalised or hushed in context and class specific ways. My intention here is to demonstrate how care is discursively formed through everyday speech, public statements, silences and quotidian practices by a range of actors. Furthermore, I am interested in how discourse reflects recognition – whether and how fathers are said and seen to care for their children.

In what follows, I draw out the numerous strands of this discursive nexus of care. To do so, I firstly outline local parenting norms, the models of masculinity they reinforce and how these are often contradicted by visible everyday practices. These elements lay the context of paternal care in Dominica. Next, I discuss the male muting this context produces with regards to the intimate model of care; how patriarchal images of masculine personhood reinforce specific silences. Thirdly, I reveal the dissonance between these silences and the emerging public visibility of caring paternal labour in recent decades (the Caribbean’s ‘new father’, as he was termed in Euro-American contexts). Fourth, I document how this proximity looks in daily practice, sharing observations of quotidian kinship acts and their evident yet unspoken significance for a growing minority of fathers and their children. Finally, I conclude by discussing an emergent phenomenon whereby fathers share photos and captions of their caring interactions via social media. I argue that these fathers are finding burgeoning voice for their care, and in the process provoking a broader re-imagining Caribbean paternal care.

# Methodological Orientation

This chapter emerges from 17 months of ethnographic fieldwork on men’s kinship lives in Dominica, a mountainous, agrarian island of some 70,000 inhabitants, sandwiched between Guadeloupe (north) and Martinique (south) in the lesser Antilles. My methodologic approach is decidedly eclectic. I draw on everyday conversations, semi-structured interviews, observations, family planning materials, television and social media to offer a multimodal analysis of the ways fathering is being discussed and performed in Dominica (and the Caribbean more broadly). Such eclecticism owes not only to the disciplinary stance of anthropology as a field concerned with the qualitative breadth of human social life (Overing and Rapport, 2000, p.245-9); but is necessary for apprehending the ‘supersyncretic’ and ‘polyrhythmic’ nature of Caribbean societies (Benitez-Rojo, 1992). As a complicated cultural setting composed of multiple migrations (Amerindian, European, African, Asian) and violent ruptures (conquest, enslavement, plantations, earthquakes, hurricanes, revolutions), the region has become an ‘open frontier’ (Trouillot, 1992) for anthropological theory; a cultural space that requires appositely varied methods to comprehend its complex dynamics. Caribbean kinship is no exception.

Early fieldwork revealed the necessity of such methodological openness. Setting out to explore what Carsten called ’the close-up, intimate and experiential dimension of kinship’ (2004, p.9; Notermans, 2008), I was quickly confronted by silences when pursuing intimate fathering via ‘the word’ (Chamoiseau, 1999) or *pawol,* as speech is termed in the island’s *kweyol[[1]](#footnote-2)*. Masculinity was muting aspects of paternal orality. Realising that mundane yet affecting dimensions of kinship were better addressed through observation, I pursued paternal care via words *and* acts. Therefore, I present here a conversation between discursive and practical modalities. In addition to people’s statements and silences, I cultivated ‘observant participation’ in the everyday lives of my Dominican informants/friends (Lassiter, 2005). Observant participation aims to invert the self-other-reifying orthodoxy of participant observation (an ethnographic staple), in favour of a method that privileges social participation and service alongside ’data collection’ (Philogene Heron, 2016, p25; 2017). I also observantly participated in Dominican social media networks, enabling me to *see* the quotidian affects and practices of fathering in both virtual and ‘real’ life. I engaged this method alongside interviews, conversations, reviews of public education documents, campaign materials and popular cultural images, from which meanings were *heard* and *read*. The result: an inductive methodology that affirms the complementarity of ‘critical discourse analysis’ and ‘ethnography’; the mutuality of the spoken/written and the observable for our understanding of everyday social worlds.

In what follows, I understand ‘discourse analysis’ as an interpretive method that enables the form and semiotic content of text/speech to be critically unpacked. Here I concern myself more with content than form. Krzyz˙anowski (2011) argues that discourse studies have ‘opened out’ in recent years, embracing more contextually embedded approaches to the analysis of language (ibid: 231); and ethnographers have reciprocated, becoming more alert to the social power of words (Tusting & Maybin, 2007). Likewise, as an anthropologist approaching discourse studies from without, I argue for the necessity of analysing word, act and social context within a common frame. This is of import in the Caribbean, a place long remarked-upon for its oral performativity, a central feature of life: in storytelling, political rhetoric (Abrahams, 1983) and everyday interlocution between kin (e.g. Richman, 2003); yet, it is also a place where subtle practices and affects reside beyond words. Therefore, discourse is one of several analytic angles employed within an inductive approach that refuses an *a priori* analytic framework. Instead, what emerges is an eclectic analysis that responds to my informants’ words, actions and the diverse media that circulate through Dominica and the Caribbean milieu. In what follows, this challenge of flexibly figuring my analytic approach to reflect the complex social worlds of my informants is applied to caring Caribbean fatherhood. Herein, I illustrate the synergy of discourse-based and ethnographic analyses as I unpick the complex relationship between intimate silences and practical paternal visibilities.

Concerning ‘sample’ size, of all 29 middle and working-class fathers I observed and/or spoke with about their practice of intimate fathering, 14 regularly undertook such care (3 times a week or more). That said, mothers still fulfilled the bulk or at least half of the parental labour in most of these cases (excluding one single father); and my sample is admittedly skewed towards paternal involvement since less-active fathers were less observable (due to the irregular nature of their care). Nevertheless, this cohort of 14 routinely caring fathers is small but qualitatively significant, as I will show. Furthermore, they caught my ethnographic attention because their daily practice contradicts prevailing discourses around fatherly absence (Brown et al., 1993).

Next, some context on Caribbean parenting ideals and everyday practices to offer some background against which to discern the silences, visibilities and vocalities I discuss.

# Parenting Ideals and Practices: a contextual setting

That fathers are expected to provide for children is a truism of Caribbean kinship. Caribbeanists recursively identify this ‘breadwinner’ function as foundational to the father’s role (RT Smith, 1956; Clarke, 1957; Greenfield, 1966, p.104-5; Rodman, 1971, p.76; Dann 1987, p.57). In their Jamaican study, Anderson, et al. state it most plainly: ‘there was total unanimity that being a good father meant providing economic support for one's children’ (1993: 16). Dominicans share this paternal ideal. Once a father is ‘named’ (assigned paternity) his primary obligation is to materially ‘maintain his child’. Yet, on this agrarian island with a long history of export dependency[[2]](#footnote-3) and financial crises precipitated by monocrop decline, financial scarcity is an everyday reality which renders paternal provision a sacrificial expression of love. Or to put it inversely, as one father did, ‘no money no love, so it be in the country’. Failure to provide is failure to care.

The ideal of provision as care, derives from a normative division of labour between parents. Fathers are charged with ‘extending a hand’ and mothers are expected to undertake the daily bulk of childrearing[[3]](#footnote-4). This division is normalised and naturalised. ‘Mother’s work’, as it is termed, involves cooking, bathing, dressing, laundering clothes and household budgeting (Lazarus-Black, 1995). Moreover, Dominican mothers are not only expected to undertake such practical *caregiving,* but also *to* *care* (Wozniak, 2002, p.9) - to express emotional concern for their children’s wellbeing, whereabouts and futures. Conversely, paternal care is normatively hands-off. Provision constitutes a loving foundation from which fatherhood can develop via a father’s other normative roles: ‘correction’ (discipline), guidance (moral, spiritual, educational) and protection. Thus, ideals of fatherly care are less about continuous emotional and domiciliary labour to meet quotidian need; and more concerned with intermittent intervention, occasioned by specific requirements (e.g. buying school books or meting out punishment).

That said, middle-class Caribbean mothers, expressing longstanding concerns at their husbands’ apparent lack of commitment to the idea of the nuclear family (Alexander, 1977), are beginning to expect their men’s daily ‘investment’ in family life (Freeman, 2014). ‘When we had move to our previous house, mista jus sit down whole day watching movies not lifting a finger, while I there working [housework]’, a middle-class mother of 3 in her 40s complained of her husband’s lack of caring labour. ‘He is always out liming [drinking with friends]. *Toute bagai se mwen* [I have to do everything]!’, exclaimed another mother of 1 in her early 50s, concerning her disinterested ‘child-father’ (father of her children). Such frustrations, and the expectations of emotional investment underpinning them, were less apparent amongst working-class mothers, who were more preoccupied with simply receiving ‘maintenance’ to meet their children’s basic needs. ‘He never give me a tin of milk, so much as a button for that child’, complained an elder working class mother recollecting on one of her daughter’s fathers. Indeed, the participation of ‘child-fathers’ in daily childrearing was far less of an explicit priority than provision for working mothers.

Working-class folk’s, and for the most part middle-class men’s, heteronormative model of parental care is closely bound to their gendered personhood. What is seen to make a proper man or woman mediates the norms and practices of parenthood. Hence, provision is tied to masculinity and fatherhood. What Blake (1961, p.192) noted of Jamaican men, I found to be true of their Dominican counterparts today: that fathers’ ‘ideal self-image appears to be that of a responsible patriarch’, a co-residing or ‘visiting’ household head who yields respect, benevolently provides and administers discipline. This cross-class hegemon endures. Likewise, for mothers of all classes the quotidian sacrifice of raising children and ensuring they ‘grow properly’ - become respectful, and successful even - also enhances their statuses as women. In short, parenting ideals exist in dialogue with ideals of man and womanhood.

Concerning the parenting practice, mothers take most of the everyday labour of reproducing households and children. The following sketch of daily caring labour is modelled on one of my industrious neighbours, yet I observed similar patterns amongst cohabiting parents island-wide. Now in her late 50s, Anne wakes well before work, around 5am, to prepare the day’s lunch. She makes breakfast for her spouse, children and grandchildren, then heads to work for 8am. Mothers who farm often wake earlier. She returns shortly after midday to serve/eat lunch, before returning to work until 4pm. In the evenings, she ‘presses clothes’, hand-squeezes juice or cleans fish for the following day. On weekends, she typically washes the family’s clothes and tends her garden. By contrast, her husband’s labour consists of a day’s work to earn a wage, to ‘put some money in de home’, as one father put it. After work he tends/feeds the animals (chickens that *provide* eggs; rabbits that *provide* meat; and dogs, which *protect*). Once this is finished, he can relax whilst his wife continues to work in the kitchen. During such periods, he plays with his grandchildren, sleeps, watches TV or goes up the road to socialise.

This portrait reflects a co-residential norm. The father that features here is regarded as a responsible man and the woman, a dutiful mother. In cases were the father is not coresident, a mother might be expected to undertake much of the paternal role too (unless a *beau pé* [step father]/son/grandfather/uncle/brother does). I offer this concise depiction of paternal and maternal labour for I see these practices as reflective of coresidential parenting in Dominica - where a mothers’ kin work is extensive and routinely crosscuts the ideals of mother and father; and a father’s usually sits within the discrete bounds of what is expected of him. Most working people imagine and discuss care within these parameters: paternal care as mainly material; mothers’ as almost everything else.

# ‘Data’ and Discussion

In the remainder of the chapter I discuss a small, though burgeoning, number of working-class fathers’ nurturant parenting, which extends into the normative domain of mothering. These practices evaded recognition. They were beyond comment; deemed neither good, bad nor interesting, as they sat beyond the remit of perceptible fathering. Next, I (a) examine fathers’ silences surrounding these practices; before (b) examining the emerging paternal visibilities –images of middle-class men and (c) practices of working-class men– that these silences conceal. These three elements constitute the ‘data’[[4]](#footnote-5) of the chapter, and are analysed in the sections in which they appear.

## Encountering Silences

Trouillot (1995) writes of historical silences as the obscuring of past happenings *via* the ambiguity between event and word; between *history as occurrence* and *history as narrative*. Although concerned with the social present and the everyday, I am similarly attentive in the ambiguities between event and word, and the concealments they produce. Notably, between caring acts and men’s capacities to discuss them. During an interview a grandfather stated in the distant third person: ‘In the rain and sun Bernard is in the construction work, nobody knows what he is thinking’. He eloquently described silence I often observed amongst Dominican men. A silence which conceals interior worlds of thought and sentiment from kin. In her paternal memoir*, Mr Potter,* Kincaid describes this psychic male landscape as ‘the many interstices of Mr Potter’s heart’ (2002, p.152); those spaces between speech and act, where Kincaid - Potter’s abandoned child - searches for paternal feeling. Like Kincaid, I try to uncover that which these silences veil. However, where her project concerns an indifferent and absconding father, mine centres visibly committed yet silent dads.

It is instructive to investigate the role of masculine ideals in this muting of paternal affects. To state that ‘men don’t talk’ is to recite a local cliché. As I learned, the intimate and affecting aspects of fatherhood are areas Dominican males seldom discuss. However, the cliché is misleading, for *Men do talk* about many things: politics, sport, sex, automobiles, religion, work; and they do so via multiple registers: humour, parables, boasting, insults, advice (Lewis, 2007). Conversely, family life is an area which Caribbean men give notably less conversational attention. I only heard Dominican men speak about fathering in specific circumstances. Many boasted about the sexual acts that produce children; others waxed lyrical about their child(ren)’s academic achievements; and some complained of acrimonious relations with ‘child-mothers’ (mothers of children) or the hardships of child ‘maintenance’. But, rarely did they speak amongst peers of their feelings concerning children (e.g. affections or non-material worries), time spent together, or the small acts of daily care (bathing, braiding hair, cooking) which many co-resident fathers, and some live-apart fathers, routinely undertake.

These mundane acts were so everyday that often mothers did not remark on them either, unless commentating on their practical undertaking (e.g. discussing hair styles), listing one’s daily activities or complaining about a lack help with chores. For example, Sharon a mother-of-3 complained of being the primary carer of her grandson: ‘I that have to bathe him, dress him, put him to sleep, before I go [out]…Nobody [i.e. his mother or father] want to do nothing… I am the only one who does things for myself, after god!’ This listing of the burdens of child care, recorded whilst Sharon was engaged in caring labour (plaiting hair), contrasts sharply with how men undertake such practices: either in silence, or rarely announcing them in their schedules. Although most fathers, when asked, told me unequivocally that they love their children, they rarely found words to elaborate such feelings beyond affirming normative commitments to protect or provide for them. In short, most men’s intimate paternal practice reflected the cliché that they don’t talk; everyday care was simply undertaken without description or explicit reflection.

I observed that men do not speak about such practices because they are without a register to do so. Rutherford describes ‘men’s silences’ (1992) as the result of a ‘disjuncture between lived experience and available vocabularies’ when they enter gender non-normative realms of practice (1992: 11). Since Caribbean men gain little esteem for their caring labour, popularly identified as ‘women’s work’ (Brown et al, 1993, p.198; Maurer, 1991), it is effectively a non-act, neither an explicit responsibility nor something expected of them. Such caring labour is thus ‘illegible’, lacking an elocutionary script (Neal, 2013). Instead, it is simply undertaken out of a personal sense of duty to contribute to a household, parenting alliance, or to meet a child’s needs. Hence, intimately involved Caribbean fathers are discursively ‘muted’ (Ardener, 2005, p.51) by masculine norms[[5]](#footnote-6) and gendered models of care, which preclude the discussion of such paternal practice and affect. Herein, men lack the surety to speak on kinship, patriarchal ideology having positing women as naturalised mothers and kinship experts, whilst dumbing-down their kinship knowledge. This muting was evident during two attempted interviews with fathers from the south-western village where I lived throughout fieldwork. I reflect on the significance of silences these interviews exposed.

*Butterfish*

Butterfish is a father-of-five in his 40s. A year into fieldwork, I began seeing him sat outside his girlfriend’s house. Eventually we struck up conversation. I told him of my research and local youth football coaching (a participatory role I assumed alongside research). It transpired that I coached his two sons, who he returns from America for three months each year to visit: 'I come back for my boys, man’. ‘I don’t have to be there [i.e. in Dominica], you know!’, he reminded, informing me of his ‘Green Card’ and construction job in America. However, electsa responsible family life and to provide for their family’s present and future. Like many of the committed fathers I spoke with, he described opting into his paternal duties – coming home to Dominica, seeing his sons, building their house extension, and forfeiting ‘liming’ (drinking with peers)– all in terms of choice and sacrifice, rather than obligation. It was his *choice to care*; normatively providing and protecting, as a father.

During his final month in Dominica I saw him walking with his sons, dropping them to football and bringing them to team fundraisers. The boys could be seen riding an electric plastic car, on the savannah with new football boots and around the village with a puppy they had nagged him for – each he had bought for them. The mutual affection between father and sons was evident. Butterfish expressed this materially by ‘spoiling’ them with gifts. And through immaterial daily acts- such as ensuring their safe movement through the village. Yet, he only spoke of the quantifiable dimensions of his care (‘jus two months I back and everyday is spend I spending on those boys’); never any mention of time spent together or his dutiful movement with them.

One Thursday after Christmas I passed their freshly painted house[[6]](#footnote-7). Butterfish was inside in a convivial mood and invited me for a whiskey. Whilst drinking he recalled his career on cruise liners: sailing to Vanuatu, America and Australia as a provision master (‘a hard work, man!’). He shared the biography of his nickname, ‘Butterfish’ (‘when you pass to cross the pacific they giving everybody the name of a fish’). He told of his now retired alias, ‘Rooster’ (‘Rooster was women business. I finish wid dat man… I am a fada now’). Then I glanced at the time; I was late for football. ‘We need to go through the whole history’, I said, throwing back my drink as I got up. 'Of course, I dere for a little while, man', he replied. I suggested returning the next morning for an interview. He agreed.

That morning, their door was unusually closed. I called from the step. No reply. I called again and waited. ‘Who dat dere?’, a voice jolted through the door. ‘Is Adom, I come and check you about the interview and becoming a fada’. Silence. Then: ‘I tired, man’, he grumbled, ‘come back another time’. ‘Ok, no problem’, I replied, then ambled back up the hill.

Initially, I thought I had overstepped the fledgling trust of our fieldwork-friendship by prying into his family life. But, days before his departure I encountered him on the road and realised trust was not the issue. We stood watching the traffic. He mentioned his suspicion towards members of the neighbourhood: ‘I don’t really talk with people, you know. You will mostly see me by myself’. Truly, I had observed that amongst men of his age associations often wither and just several dependable friendships are maintained into middle age. To my surprise, he then added, ‘You alone I does really pull up and talk to in the village’.

Though I will never know why he did not answer the door that morning, it seems that his giving up ‘woman business’ and taking on material responsibilities were the aspects of fathering he felt comfortable to vocalise in casual conversation. These he presented as a caring sacrifice; trading his charismatic ‘Rooster’ persona for that of a father and ‘old man’ was an ageing metamorphosis he could comfortably discuss. But my attempt to investigate the intimate details of his fathering was to enter a private realm, which, if not ‘a secret to himself’ (Kincaid, 2002), was perhaps so unremarkable that my interest in it was confusing and uncomfortable. Thus, Butterfish possessed a limited vocality on paternal affects and practices, which afforded discussion of some features of his fathering whilst precluding others. Perhaps the very idea of the interview represented an intrusion into sensitive psychic ground.

*Mr Scotland*

With Mr Scotland, a policeman and 59-year-old grandfather, the opposite occurred. Not only did we conduct an interview, but it was more disclosing than either of us had anticipated. He shared his love for his children, caring relationship to his wife, his frustrating career in the police, and his special closeness to his two grandsons (‘is they I am living for’). As we concluded the interview, he told me, ‘That’s the first time I opened-up to-, I’m not a great speaker. I’m not a person that would just open out to-, it’s probably the first time I’m doing that’. For this interview to be the first-time Mr Scotland was finding words to discuss the profound significance of these relationships amazed me (if just for the eloquence with which he spoke). The interview had tapped a register that was foreign to him.

Mr Scotland and I lived nearby one-another. Before the interview, we had not met[[7]](#footnote-8) but afterwards I saw him carrying his sleeping grandsons to the car as I passed his house; or would hail his Nissan as he drove home. I always showed regard as we passed, acknowledging him and the reflections he had so candidly shared. He had drawn his interview responses from the depths of himself. Still, perhaps for this reason, when we re-encounter one-another in the street, our meetings felt stilted. My questions had coaxed him from the realm of surface-level male interaction, disarming him of the safety of silence. Such silence so often sits beneath humour, parables, banter, even anger, providing protection against the vulnerability of intimate disclosure. Now we did know how to approach each another on the roadside. We attempted to commune, as acquaintances do, through light conversation; but beneath our interchanges sat a knowing of the other. An unequal knowing, that I possessed, of his feelings towards his beloved kin. Though I assured him that I would treat this information with anonymity (I use a pseudonym), perhaps the act of unveiling previously unspoken feelings, symbolically exposed a site of personal weakness to the outside world in which we later met.

I once asked Simon, a young Kalinago[[8]](#footnote-9) father, why men fell silent when asked about fathering. His reply was straightforward,

It’s not like you have to bring out your family business to your friends, you know. What happen home, stay home. [With] your family. When you pull up with your friends you chat about something else.

So obvious once stated so plainly: Dominican Men socialise in and predominantly inhabit ‘outside’ spaces (roadsides, workplaces, bars), yet for a man to ‘bring out family business’ in such public contexts is to expose the privacy of his home life, with its stresses and vulnerabilities, to peers who may later ridicule him. Whilst I do not think Mr Scotland believed I was going to betray his trust, I think the experience was nonetheless unfamiliar and disarming for this reason.

Psychoanalyst Michael Diamond has noted that,

Fathering is frequently unsettling since men are typically unaccustomed to complex affective, relational upbringing and the profound depth of feelings not easily put into words that are evoked by their children (1998, p.246).

Indeed, reflecting on these 2 interviews – one characterised by the avoidance of discomfort (Butterfish), the other by the discomfort of over-disclosure (Scotland) – I see that my questioning scratched at silences imposed by masculine norms; norms which afford paternal intimacies/affects little public value, significance or noteworthiness. Pursuing descriptions of these through ‘the word’ – let alone in the staged format of the interview – provoked unease in my interlocutors. And where words could be found, prevailing modes of male sociality failed to accommodate the disclosures divulged and vulnerabilities unearthed.

Most Dominican fathers I discuss observably experienced the kinds of affects Scotland mentioned, yet they were often implicit and pre-articulate. There simply *were*; experienced, felt and observable, but not uttered. Hence, intimate paternal practice can be described as an ‘imponderable’ feature of Caribbean kinship:

...a series of phenomena of great importance which cannot possibly be recorded by questioning or computing documents, but have to be observed in their full actuality.... Here belong such things as the routine of a man's working day, the details of his care of the body, or the manner of taking food and preparing it... (Malinowski, 2002 [1922], p.18).

I often observed the details of bodily care, cooking/feeding and other patterns of caring labour to meet children’s needs on many occasions in Dominica. Later in the chapter, I turn to observation and description of everyday life to make sense of working-class men’s nurturing paternal practices, ‘in their full actuality’. But first, some history on the emerging visibility of fatherhood in Dominica and the wider Caribbean– from middle-class, foreign and emigrant sources. These provide a backdrop for the dominant culture’s representational reimagining of Caribbean fathering, against which working men’s observed practices are positioned.

## Emerging Paternal Visibilities

The idea of the father as provider, guide, disciplinarian and protector has long existed in Dominica. However, father*hood* as something a man embraces or rejects as a matter of identity and for which he is publicly appraised, this is new; appearing from the late 1970s. Barrow identified it as a regional shift, a ‘cultural reconfiguration of fatherhood’, from ‘the traditional version of breadwinner and authority figure to a more rounded role with a daily involvement in care and communication’ (2010, p.137). However, to accept this claim is not to say that fathers were not demonstrably affectionate before this. Based on the oral testimonies of elders, I would suggest that perhaps nurturant fatherhood was just not visible in the public domain before this time. Thus, Mona, a grandmother and youth group leader born in the 1930s recalled of her childhood,

My very first memories of life were on my father’s knee. And he’d be smoking his pipe and talking. And my ear would be somewhere on his chest... and his voice would be reverberating throughout my ear. And that is how I would fall asleep at night. Every night.

Such intimate memories were not unusual to elders raised in early-to-mid-20th century Dominica. Such micro-histories are largely hidden from record behind narratives of fathers of this era as distant and indifferent figures, as other elders also recalled. Hence, interactions like Mona’s were concealed in the private domain. Mrs LeTouche, a grandmother and retired headmistress recollected, ‘before, you would never see a man walking with his child, holding his child, on the bus with his child. Men simply didn’t do such things’. These elder observers, like Barrow (2010), posited a diachronic before-after view of intimate fatherhood’s emergence.

Their narratives are corroborated by family planning campaigns from the era. From the late 1970s Caribbean governments and family planning agencies made a concerted push to increase fathers’ family involvement. Malthusian concerns with ‘overpopulation’ on islands with small resource bases, low foreign exchange and import dependencies, centred ‘family planning’ as a development priority for newly-independent Caribbean states (Bourbonnais, 2016). Inheriting the structural functionalist logic of colonial social science (e.g. Simey, 1946) and its policy agendas (Putnam 2014), national administrators viewed ‘the family’ as the ‘basic unit’ of governance. Hence, resolving the apparent pathologies of ‘illegitimacy’, ‘promiscuity’, ‘absent’ fathers and single mothers, would ostensibly alleviate numerous social ills (‘delinquency’, criminality, poverty). These concerns aligned with anxieties amongst the middle-classes and religious leaders towards ‘lower-class’ men who sire innumerable unsupported children (Barrow, 2001). Fathers deemed to fit this profile were to be ‘brought in’ to the family; to ‘maintain’ children, to become patriarchal guides and disciplinarians. Moreover, such social agendas were married with an emerging international dissemination of a gentler, more demonstrative image of the father. The ‘new father’, as he was known across the North Atlantic[[9]](#footnote-10).

In Dominica, these messages were propagated by The Dominica Planned Parenthood Association[[10]](#footnote-11) (DPPA) via posters in municipal buildings and health. Some presented emotive images of abandoned children and mothers; others shamed absconding fathers. They appealed to fathers’ consciences, imploring them to present themselves financially and emotionally. They also urged men to take responsibility for reproductive planning and child maintenance. Furthermore, some posters a proposed a broader definition of care, beyond the financial. One poster of a father assisting his daughter with her homework read,

One of the nicest ways that he can show his children that he cares is by spending time with them...being there when he’s needed. Do you know what is happening in your children’s lives? Are you there when they need to be comforted...cheered... guided? Your presence could make the difference whether your child succeeds or fails (National Family Planning Board, C.1979).

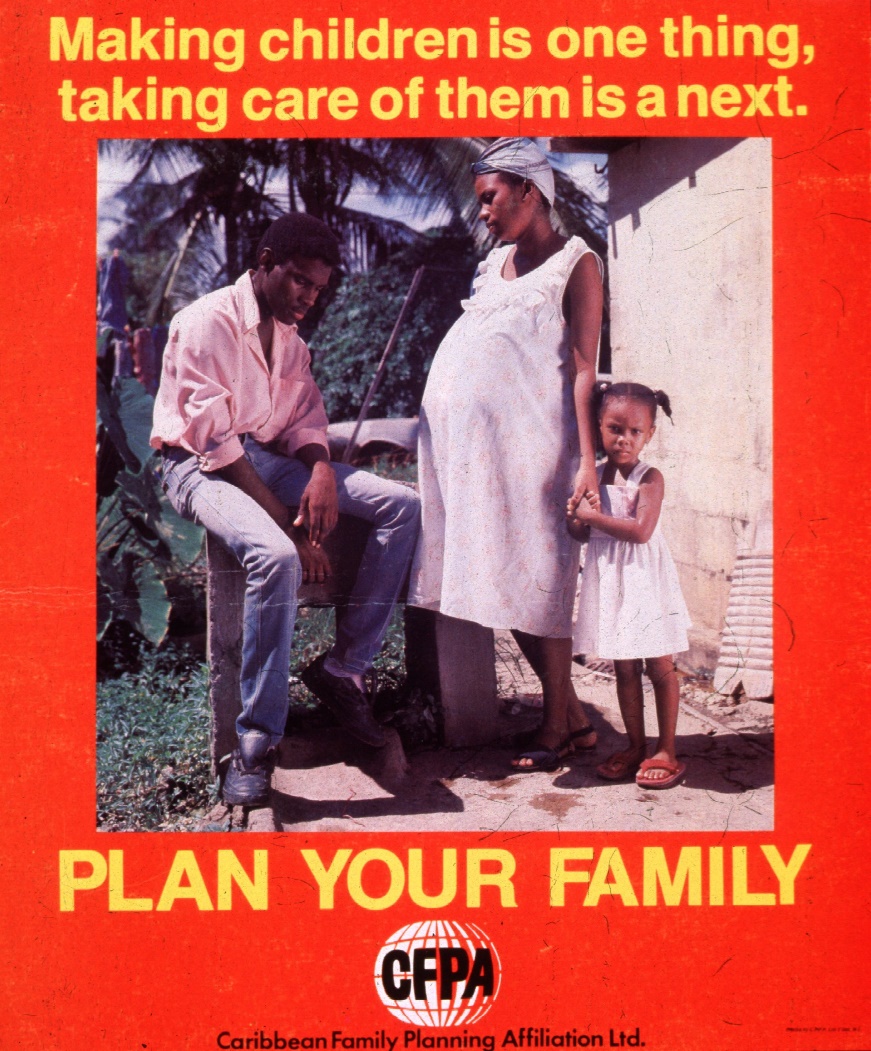
Such posters targeted paternal pride, drawing a direct link between a child’s success (e.g. in school, a man’s boasting fodder; Wilson, 1973, p.126) and a father’s daily presence in their lives. Some posters displayed guidance and support; in others, men cradled infants. For the first time, public representations of Caribbean fatherhood, as explicitly ‘responsible’ and emotionally engaged, were entering the public domain with the aim of transforming men. However, it is worth noting that the more attentive looking fathers in these posters appear to be middle-class (smartly dressed, in well-furnished houses), by contrast to those that depict impoverished looking absconders (e.g. a man wearing shoes without laces, below). Thus, a classed image of attentive fatherhood was emerging.

Figure 1 - 'Plan Your Family', Caribbean Family Planning Association (Date Unkown)

The 1980s also witnessed satellite TV’s arrival in Dominica. Although anthropologists have highlighted parents’ negative perceptions of American TV’s effects on Dominican youth (Quinlan & Hansen, 2013; Blank, 2003), my interlocutors contended that it also had some positive influence on local parenting. Representations of middle-class black family life in American films and TV, the most notable being *The Cosby Show,* exported an ideal of the benevolent black nuclear patriarch: patient, confident, materially secure, ‘respectable’ and, most importantly, deeply involved in his children’s lives. This was a paternal profile that resonated with many. Nevertheless, as the Dominican milieu is porous to many extra-local images, objects and experiences, that may each impact kinship ideals, it is difficult to isolate the emulation of American TV as the source of shifting paternal visibilities.

Instead, for Dominicans who work, study and visit family in northern metropoles, migration may inform changing embodiments of fatherhood. Fox (1999) tentatively makes this case in her study of Jamaican fatherhood. Her informant, Richard, ‘a peaceful Rasta’ from a rural village, who cooks, cleans and assists his daughters with their homework, spent several years in London where he witnessed a fluid division of domestic labour[[11]](#footnote-12) between his sister and her husband. They cooperatively co-parented and shared housework, which Richard continued in Jamaica, where he became a more hands-on presence in his daughters’ and ‘baby-mother’s’ lives. Likewise, Dominican men who encountered new norms in Canada, the US and the UK, returned with expanded concepts of fatherhood. Yet, equally the 1980s’ elaboration of Caribbean feminisms, mothers’ demands for greater paternal involvement and the emergence of men’s groups like Father’s Inc[[12]](#footnote-13) (1990s) and CariMAN[[13]](#footnote-14) (2010s), also informed shifting ideas. Mrs LeTouche (quoted above) summarised this play between local transformation and incorporated foreign symbols: ‘we go out and we see how they do it...as time changes, things change too. The methods of living change’. Thus, circular migration and cosmopolitan relations carry new practices into the evolving Antilles, and in time, these become embedded in everyday life.

Given the silences and imported images of fathering, it is difficult to discern a single cause for Caribbean men’s shifting practices. Rather, various images and experiences– family planning materials, television, migration and gender-focused activism– have moved through the Caribbean (and her diaspora) to partially normalise intimate fatherhood. Nonetheless, bringing this section to bear on the previous, we are confronted by a paradox. Images of intimate fatherhood are increasingly present in the milieu - appropriated, often from above (by family planners, the media and some returning emigrants) - whilst the fathers I worked with lacked the elocutionary register to articulate their experience of such practices. A discursive dissonance between dominant society imagery and common practice is apparent. Hence, fathers are increasingly told they should be more hands-on, and many are, yet this does not necessarily give them the linguistic and emotional means to discuss such acts. How then to make sense of these ‘imponderable’ practices and affects? How to capture kinship meanings that reside beyond words? Herein observation, becomes an important means for comprehending these increasingly visible yet persistently under-discussed interactions Next, a series of observations on their significance.

## How Men Care

*At Home: Cooking, Bodily Care, and Minding Children*

I was struck by the number of co-resident fathers who undertook part or most of their household’s cooking. For example, Vince, a father-of-one living with his common-law wife and daughter, is the main cook in their home. Whilst his wife works 8am-4pm in a shop, he is a plumber with flexible working hours, meaning he often cooks. He prepares breakfast (eggs salad, tea, *mastiff* [traditional] bread), lunch (Dominican’s main meal; e.g. ‘ground provisions’ [yam, sweet potato, cassava], rice, beans, meat/fish) and dinner (typically bread and tea). Saturdays are a ‘free up’ day where eating varies with their plans, mood and what is available. And on Sundays his wife prepares a dinner of macaroni pie, stewed chicken and rice. Their household food-rhythms are inherited from Vince’s mother’s household, in which he learnt the rudiments of cooking; continuing them in his procreative family. Whilst Dominicans have long acknowledged that single men (of Vince’s father’s generation; mid-60s) are proficient in preparing a ‘one pot’[[14]](#footnote-15), it is altogether more recent for a family’s food-ways to be inherited by a son and become his domain as a father. Such cases are relatively few: 5 out of 29 fathers I observed cooked most meals for their children; though, significantly more cooked when a wife/girlfriend was unavailable. Men were not talkative in this area so the prevalence of such activities was difficult to ascertain. Nonetheless, fathers who cook are far from anomalous in Dominican households; and this process of feeding children, once associated primarily with mothers, enable the development of close nurturant bonds with young kin (as is well documented elsewhere, Carsten, 1995). Fathers who cooked for children were often those most involved in their lives in other ways, and were spoken of with fondness by their children.

Concerning children’s bodily care, I observed fathers bathing small children when I visited them at home; or giving them curative ‘sea baths’ by the bay (for numerous ailments). Similarly, I recall several women remarking on uncles or brothers who ‘kango’ (‘cornrow’ braid) their daughter’s hair. Yet, only when I moved to the yard of felon-turned-father, Scratchie (a year into fieldwork), did I begin to regularly see such bodily care. Here my fieldnotes detail observations of Scratchie and his 4-year-old’s interactions across 2 days in 2013.

*‘Taking out kango’*

*I arrive by Scratchie[[15]](#footnote-16)to see him seated at the table with his daughter standing next to him as he upbraids her ‘kango’. ‘Ow daddy it hurts’, she says as he pulls the final tooth of the pink and white comb though her short hair. He is taking out the style she had worn to school that day – presumably Cyrila [his wife] or [teenage] step-daughter had ‘combed’ [plaited] her hair that morning. As Scratchy progresses from one row to the next he is firm in his touch. A short ‘tough’ [stocky] man with full, hard, working hands; he is firm yet gentle in how he treats his daughter. ‘Ow daddy too hard’. [Scratchie:] ‘Sorry baby’ - as he works his way onto the next braid. I ask if he can ‘comb’ [as well as take out] hair. He says, ‘no, not to say kango, but I can plait’. As I leave them sitting at the table with the TV playing in the background Cyrilla is on the phone in the bedroom, Mahalia is standing quietly and he is a picture of concentration, meticulously and dutifully unpicking each interwoven portion with the comb and his fingers.*

*Bathing in the Yard*

*Friday evening after dark, I finished up some repairs on the shack and came up the concrete step to say goodnight to the family. Scratchie was outside bathing Mahalia under the bright bulb that illuminates their yard. He filled a ‘bom’ [pot] with water as she shuffled around covered in suds, fighting the cool evening breeze. Her father then poured the bom over her whilst she scrubbed frantically and the soap rinsed away. As he poured she told him she was thirsty. She opened her mouth to drink the last bit of water before he wrapped her in a towel and she darted inside.*

These brief vignettes of quotidian interactions illustrate the kinds of bodily care that many fathers undertake, as well as revealing robust form with which they practice it. Hard-worn hands of working fathers appear at odds with the gentle affectivity of the middle-class fathers in family planning posters. Nonetheless, fathers’ improvisation of fatherly care, with bodies less habituated to softness[[16]](#footnote-17) (than many mothers), testifies to a committed if unremarkable love for their children. Furthermore, by painfully upbraiding their hair or washing them in a chilly yard fathers also contribute, albeit unintentionally, to developing a hardiness amongst their children that is valorised[[17]](#footnote-18) in Dominica.

Finally, ‘looking at’ (minding) or simply being with children, whilst a mother is out (at work or church) was common amongst co-residing fathers. Although, more frequently mothers were at home with children whilst the father was working or running an errand. Nonetheless, stay-at-home fathering was often a practical imperative for working-class parents due to declines in commercial agriculture since the 1990s (notably bananas; Mantz, 2003), and the growth of service industries (hotels, restaurants, banks) where women have fixed-hours employment, whilst tradesmen often have flexible job schedules (like Vince). Hence, I routinely observed children entertaining themselves in the yard after school whilst fathers fixing bicycles, cars, or did house repairs nearby, supervising them with their peripheral vision. Here dads issued orders to ‘take it easy nuh, man!’ if children played unsafely; young children were entertained with a book, toy or tablet computer; and older boys were encouraged to join their father’s work by fetching tools. Therefore, paternal childcare sat alongside activities more affirming of masculine norms, whilst being responsive to the immediate needs and safety of children.

*Outside: Daddy ‘Jump-Up’ as ‘Fathering Event’*

Whether they live-apart or reside with children, fathers normatively figure as a bridge to ‘outside’ public spaces: *fêtes* (festivals)*,* the sea, the ‘Zion’ (provision garden), roadside, workplace or overseas. Diamond emphasises that ‘fathers traditionally play a pivotal, representational role in introducing their infants to the exciting, larger outer world’ (1998, p.261). Whilst Lazarus-Black argues that Antiguan fathering is enacted through ‘kinship events’ (1995, p.52). Likewise, alongside the quotidian, Dominican fathering occurs through such fathering moments; venturing, with daddy, into the outside world. ‘Taking the children out’, as Dominicans say, includes trips for ice cream on ‘Bayfront’ (in Roseau, the capital), trans-insular drives, ‘going beach’ or ‘river’; and usually occurs during holidays and weekends - moments beyond humdrum routines. Furthermore, seasonal festivals present an opportunity for children to witness the ‘bacchanal’ of carnival, national independence or a village feast (traditional *fêtes*) under a father’s supervision. Mothers expect fathers to perform this duty. Providing treats and amusement on such occasions constitutes material expressions of care and represent the idealised context of father-child co-presence in the outside world. Conversely, many fathers without money were at a loss for how to entertain their children. Hence, this ideal also motivates fathers of limited means to make sacrifices necessary to take their child out. This brief example of Okim and his 10-year-old’s Carnival trip demonstrates the significance of such sacrifice during a fathering event between dad and daughter.

On carnival Tuesday, 2014, Okim’s daughter walked the steep ‘Backstreet’ to wake her father and remind him of his promise to take her to the Roseau parade. Like me, Okim lived alone in a shack in Scratchie’s yard. He had recently been injured in a motorbike accident, so whilst he got back on his feet Scratchie had convinced his wife to let Okim stay. He came down in a hurry to bathe in the communal shower. As he passed my door I offered him a quick drink. He shared his day’s plan,

I wanted to go town and free-up myself today but de moda say she not taking her [their daughter, to the] parade. Me and de moda jus get in a lickle *talk* [argument] for dat. But I checking, I doh want our daughter to see me and her moda in no *vile* [confrontation]... Best I go town wid her. Jah see what I doing, he alone that can give me my blessings…

He continued,

I love my lickle girl, *wii* boy! She is all I have in dis world, I doh have woman [a girlfriend]. When I old and pooping on myself is she dat taking care of me, eh! She understands. If we go in town [and] I only have five dollars, she will ask for something for two-fifty. She understands!

For most of his male ‘partners’ the carnival season was a time of drunken revelry. By contrast, Okim’s choice to take his daughter to town instead of drink rum and *dwivay* (party/wander) was an expression of love and sacrifice for his child (albeit in response to his child-mother). Okim clearly appreciated their time together. And since finances are limited he also appreciated her modest demands when they are out. Likewise, I could see from her excitement that she appreciates her father’s willingness to direct time and funds to her during the festivities.

The following day I ‘bounced him up’ (bumped into him) on the roadside with his friends. ‘How your carnival was with the little lady, nuh?’ I queried as we ‘knocksed’ fists. 'It was nice, *wii’,* he replied with a wide smile, adding, ‘anytime I wid her I cannot get in no gang or get in no *pwoblem*. Wen de music finish I leave town'. Thus, not only did their time together bring mutual enjoyment, it also saved him from potential perils that befall young men at carnival.

Figure 2 - Okim and his Daughter. Loubiere, Dominica. 2014

These ethnographic vignettes and visual portraits of caring labour and fathering events, reveal sentiments beneath the silences that envelope them. Although some of the textual and photographic depictions were framed by the father’s words, these were uttered during momentary exchanges not extended reflections. To depict *via* photo and description is to capture aspects of paternal experience which are there for the eye to see, but fathers were unable (or chose not) to express. Therefore, instead of transcript or detailed quotation, ethnographic description and photograph enable us to interpret the fine semiotic texture of these exchanges, their variegated joys, imperatives and impacts, for father and child.

Finally, I turn to the visual and textual representations of working-class-fathers themselves, as they begin to re-imagine and give voice to their fatherhood in virtual space.

## Virtually Re-imag(in)ing Fatherhood: Paternal Profiling and Captioned Care

Thus far I have discussed a paradoxical situation: whereby tightly gendered notions of parental care produce male silences; silences which, in turn, conceal increasingly visible ‘hands on’ fathering. However, online social platforms like Facebook and Instagram are offering a paternal vocality that disrupts these silences. Fathers set profile pictures and ‘share’ or are ‘tagged in’ photos/videos of themselves with their children. These images present father with their ‘pride and joy’, their ‘responsibility’, proof of their virility and proof of their ‘name living on’ in the world. This I call *paternal profiling,* the declaration of fatherhood via profile pictures and posts. These men, of varied class and age (teens to 40s), also caption their photos, thus appealing for public recognition as caring fathers. Such *captioned care* offers a shorthand frame for the images by describing shared activities or concisely articulating his affection for his child.



Figure - ‘Nothing better than hanging out with your kids. They are my heart beat’. Scratchie, daughters and step-grandson, Facebook, 2014.

What is particularly telling about the photos is not simply their depictions of intimate paternal proximity. Since the 1970s and 80s, with cameras becoming more accessible, families shared personal photographs of men cuddling, stood holding and simply being with their children, as numerous interlocutors reported. What is new is the volume of such images and the way their captions address a transnational online audience. They communicate with a diasporic Caribbean public, at home and abroad, the existential importance of everyday intimacies (see figure 3). Paternal profiling and captioned care are observable worldwide, amongst various ethnicities; yet, amongst black populations in the Caribbean, U.S. and U.K. bear special significance due to prevalent stereotypies concerning black paternal absence/marginality. (See the work of Zun Lee, NYC, or Aaron Sylvester, London, for grassroots photography that challenges these stereotypes[[18]](#footnote-19)). Hence, Dominican fathers, aware of such caricatures, are re-imagi(ni)ng Caribbean fatherhood; that is, reconceiving it on their own lived-terms via photos and brief textual assertions.

For working-class men, such auto-photographic depictions, ‘selfies’ of everyday co-being with their children engage an implicit dialogue with the polished middle-class representations of family planning organisations. Rather than focusing on images of middle-class intimacy and working-class fecklessness, such paternal profiling proclaims that anyone can be a hands-on father. Therefore, equivalents of the paternal portraits that were circulating the 1970s-80s from above (on posters and TV), are now entering the smartphones and laptops of Caribbeans in greater frequency. Importantly, these are no longer contrived by family planning agencies and American TV producers, or primarily carried in the returnees’ habits. Online platforms enable anyone with internet access, rich or poor, to contribute to the definition of caring contemporary fatherhood through camera and text. (significant in Dominica, where there are 107.4 cell-phone subscriptions per 100 inhabitants and an internet access rate of 58.6%; International Telecoms Union, 2016).

Furthermore, Caribbean social media networks have begun collectively appraising online paternal performance. The most widely discussed is a Facebook video depicting a Jamaican man bathing his son outside[[19]](#footnote-20) (1 million views; 1,300 comments). His predominantly Caribbean audience either praised him (‘Wow beautiful, just beautiful...the rest a fathers dem deh that need to step up?’), found humour in his bathing style (‘A message to non-Caribbean…people. This is how we Jamaicans exercise our babies, so don't think its child abuse…’) or criticised his roughness (‘He bathing that baby like it was rolling in mud… why he scrubbin the child so?’). However, as the slim dreadlocked man vigorously cleaned his boy and dangled him to dry by his chubby limbs, he addressed the camera with a message,

…you see me, when it come to my yout dem me nah play! All if me ave a woman, an’ all if me doh have one, me still ah take care ah my yout! Because [you] wann know why? Them got some fada out dere, all dem do is get up and breed people gal pickney [girl children], an gone bout dem business and doh care about dem [children]. But you see me? Me a yout, me love my kid and me na wait pon uman [woman] fe do nottin for my pickney [child]… So me ah tell all fada out dere, you see dis what me a do right now-, unno [you all should] take care yur pickney dem, you [h]ear!? Because you done know *me ah feelin him you know*… So as me ah say big up and respect to all fadda out dere and all mudda out dere who take care ah dem yout! Because you see him? Look pon him! He favour me [i.e. looks like me]. Him ah *for* me [i.e. he is my child]. Me love him you know, he is my son!

The voice of this young father, emphatically encouraging others to take care of their children, praising parents who already do, and expressing affection for his baby son, drowns out the squabble of Facebook commenters. As he holds his clean infant to his chest and declares his love for the child (‘me ah feelin him’) it becomes clear that he, like others who post and caption photos/videos with their children, has given expanding voice to nurturing Caribbean fatherhood through this new online medium.

# Conclusion

In this chapter I have proposed the complementarity of discourse-based and ethnographic methods (interviews/conversation and observation) for understanding recent shifts in Caribbean fathering. I highlighted how masculine norms impose silences around intimate fatherhood, at the same time as the latter is becoming increasingly visible. This paradox revealed the limited efficacy of interview methods for interpreting the ‘imponderable’ significance of hands-on fatherhood; whilst detailed observation was foregrounded as a means of understanding quotidian intimate interactions. Finally, I have explored emergent caring discourses on social media; the burgeoning voices of fathers who are beginning to represent and rephrase fatherhood on their own terms, through captioned photos and videos, articulating a democratised image of Afro-Caribbean fathering, as they see and experience it.

It remains for the future to reveal the extent to which this trend will contribute to a regional re-definition of care, or a reconfiguration of gendered ideals in Dominica and the Caribbean. Nevertheless, even if parenting ideology lags behind contemporary practice, it is clear that those who ‘step up’ (as the Facebook commenter ordered) by becoming more hands on, are also starting to *speak up.* These fathers are finding voice and therefore demanding that their small acts be acknowledged, whilst inviting others to do the same.

And for social researchers who navigate the epistemological interstices of discourse, practice and experience in search of meaning, so we must continually adjust our methods in response to people’s shifting modes of expression. Hence, an appositely flexible disposition unto the social world is in order so that we may analyse word, act and social context within a common frame.

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1. With French and British colonial histories, the Dominican lingua franca is a mesolect of English vocabulary with a Francophone *kweyol* syntax and a sprinkling of *kweyol* vocabulary. (Dominican *kweyol* is akin to Haitian and French Antillean *Kreyols*). Dominica has been described as having a ‘fragmented language situation’ (Trouillot, 1988), with kweyol being a first language in many villages, whilst those from Roseau (the capital) may know little *kweyol*. *Kweyol* is recognised as the folk/working-class/peasant tongue of the island, whilst formal English is that of the elite/middle-classes/governance/colonisation. Nonetheless, people of various backgrounds code-switch fluidly as they move through context and social geography. For a detailed contemporary study of Dominican *kweyol* see Paugh (2013). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. From coffee, to vanilla, to cocoa, sugar, limes (Trouillot 1988) and, finally, bananas – the latter decimated by WTO rulings banning European Union quotas at the turn of the 21st century (Klak, 2012). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Or mothers are charged with finding an aunt, grandmother, *nennen* (godmother), foster mother or father to do so if she is unable to fulfil this role. See Gordon (1987) for an overview of the ‘child shifting’ phenomenon. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. I problematise this term due to my discomfort with reducing complex human biographies and intimate practices into this positivist idiom. Yet, I retain the term for ease of reference for the reader. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Writing on her husband’s theory of ‘muted groups’ Shirley Ardener notes, ‘Edwin always maintained that muted group theory was not only, or even primarily, about women – although women comprised a conspicuous case… he also drew on his personal experience as a sensitive (intellectual) boy among hearty (sportive) boys in an all-boys London secondary school’ (2005, p.51). Hence, non-hegemonic masculine expression is also muted. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. Dominicans traditionally carry out housing renovations such as painting, replacing roofing sheets and fixing fences at Christmas time (as is true of Trinidad, Miller, 1994). Here Butterfish had painted the house as part of his male household role. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. His daughter, a neighbourhood acquaintance, had introduced us. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. Kalinago people (once termed ‘Caribs’) are the indigenous inhabitants of Dominica, of which there is approx. 2,100 people and amongst the general Dominican population most people claim some Kalinago ancestry. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. Erola and Huttenen (2011) called it ‘metanarrative of the *new fathe*r’, reflecting Hawkins and Dollahite’s ‘generative father’ (1997), Pruett’s ‘nurturing father’ (1987), Doherty, Kouneski & Erikson’s ‘responsible father’ (1998) and Pleck’s ‘positively involved father’ (1997). In short, a demonstrably sympathetic, ‘hands-on’ paternal image. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. Founded in 1976 DPPA is part of the Caribbean Family Planning Affiliation (CFPA) and International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. This echoes Kan and Laurie’s finding that of all ethnicities in the UK, ‘black Caribbean men hav[e]… the highest housework share compared to other groups’ (2016, p.11). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. A Jamaican group that pioneered the promotion of ‘responsible fatherhood’ (Brown, 1995). [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. The Caribbean Male Action Network, a regional activist group, supported by UNWomen, that works for gender justice (e.g. ending ‘gender based violence’). See, <http://menengage.org/regions/caribbean/> [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. A dish of fish/smoked meat with provisions (plantain, yam, dasheen, green banana, plantain), *dombwé/* dumplings and seasoning, cooked in a single pot over gas/coals. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
15. To ‘go by’ someone is to visit them at home. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
16. ‘Soft’ is an insult men wield on the ball-field, street or at work and is antithetical to the valorised toughness of a ‘big hard back man’ who eats ‘hard food’ (provisions) and can ‘play hard’ at football. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
17. To describe a child as ‘good for their self’ –bold, assertive and resilient (Paugh, 2013, P.115), is a compliment. Though mothers scold and beat children, fathers are seen and expected to be firmer with children. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
18. Sylvester’s 2016 exhibition *Dad: the forgotten parent? New Black Stereotype* (The Guardian, 2016) or Lee’s 2011 work, *Father Figure* (The New Yorker, 2015) provide apt examples of challenges to dominant caricatures of Black fatherhood. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
19. Retrieved November 10, 2015, from <https://www.facebook.com/1526251450984199/videos/1534461360163208/> [↑](#footnote-ref-20)