


# An interrogation of research on Caribbean social issues: establishing the need for an indigenous Caribbean research approach

Shakeisha Wilson<sup>1</sup>, Camille Nakhid<sup>2</sup>,  
Anabel Fernandez-Santana<sup>2</sup> and Margaret Nakhid-Chatoor<sup>3</sup>

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## Abstract

Caribbean social issues, like so many other global issues, are often researched and addressed using traditional Western philosophies and methodologies. However, some societies have criticized the use of Western approaches recognizing their unsuitability to accurately assess the distinctive culture, identity, and overall social structures of these societies. An investigation of the use of Caribbean research methodologies or approaches revealed that there is a significant absence in the use of culturally specific ways of conducting research in the Caribbean region and diaspora. This pattern was found to be consistent with the authors' findings from a critical review of research methodologies used by postgraduate scholars in investigating Caribbean-related issues in the past 10 years. As a result, this article lobbies for the promotion of more culturally specific and relevant Caribbean research approaches that are respectful of the worldviews and practices of locals within the region.

## Keywords

Caribbean research approach, Caribbean social issues, indigenous research methodology, Liming and ole talk

## Introduction

Caribbean social issues, like so many other global issues, are often researched and addressed using traditional Western philosophies and methodologies. However, some societies have criticized the use of Western approaches, recognizing their unsuitability to accurately assess the distinctive culture, identity, and overall social structures of these societies. The Caribbean, similarly unique, is complex to define due to the footprints of its colonial-plantation heritage, diverse languages and varied stages of economic growth and development. As Norman Girvan (2001) aptly noted, there is no established consensus on the definition of Caribbean given this definition “might be based in language and identity, geography, history and culture, geopolitics, geoeconomics, or organization” (p. 4). Girvan further posited that the choice of definition for the Caribbean is largely dependent on the context in which it is being used.

As diverse as the Caribbean region is, so are the range of social problems with which they are faced. Common to a number of Caribbean nations are issues of crime, drug trafficking, and poverty. Some of the challenges faced by these countries are associated with their small island nature which is known to contribute to economic and social vulnerabilities, especially in the face of larger economies and the absence of a level playing field in the global marketplace. The latter is inherited from past colonial ties that determined

the early agricultural focus of our economies, which post slavery evolved into non-reciprocal preferential trade agreements that seemingly mined rather than developed Caribbean small economies. The focus of this article, however, is not to highlight the challenges of our Caribbean region. Rather, we endeavour to explore how our social problems have been traditionally researched and addressed, and argue the need for an authentic, rigorous and relevant Caribbean research methodology that will more accurately identify and explore our concerns. This article reviews the research approaches predominantly employed by scholars in the past 10 years to research Caribbean social issues.

Although we have been trained formally within Western academia and have conducted research using Western approaches, as local researchers, we are cognizant of the need for a culturally relevant methodology within the Caribbean. To the extent that this paper calls for bringing to the forefront and employing Caribbean

<sup>1</sup>Knox Community College, Jamaica

<sup>2</sup>Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand

<sup>3</sup>The University of Trinidad and Tobago, Trinidad and Tobago

## Corresponding author:

Shakeisha Wilson, Knox Community College, P.O. Box 52, Spalding, Clarendon, Jamaica.

Email: wilson.shakeisha@gmail.com

research methodologies, the complexity of heritage in the Caribbean necessitates that we are considerate in our use of the term 'indigenous Caribbean approach'. Two of the authors of this paper are of Carib heritage and find it useful to refer to Bagele Chilisa's explication of the word indigenous when applied to research methodologies. Chilisa (2012) states that indigenous suggests a focus on "a cultural group's ways of perceiving reality, ways of knowing, and the value systems that inform research processes" (p.13). Methodologies are indigenous when researchers study their "ways of seeing reality; ways of knowing, and their value systems which are informed by their indigenous knowledge systems and shaped by the struggle to resist and survive the assault on their culture"(Chilisa, 2012, p.13). As with other indigenous approaches, this Caribbean research methodology is intended to offer a framework for decolonization that acknowledges the twofold origins of the Caribbean (indigenous populations and the subsequent legacy of colonization and plantocracy), regards the centrality of Caribbean identity and culture (irrespective of the ongoing debates and lack of unanimous consensus on the definition of Caribbean), and draws on the cultural practices and traditions that have helped to sustain a sense of unity and survival both within and across Caribbean countries.

### Researching Caribbean social issues

An investigation of the use of Caribbean research methodologies or approaches reveals that there is a significant absence in the use of culturally specific ways of conducting research within the Caribbean. Although numerous theories have been, and continue to be developed that assess the socio-historical contexts of the region, including the evolution from colonization through to globalization and beyond, insufficient attention has been given to developing local ways of researching and understanding the Caribbean. Issues of cultural identity, race, class, and gender have been researched and theorized extensively. Yet, the specific research approaches employed do not reflect anything uniquely Caribbean. A potential opportunity to uncover a Caribbean research approach was hoped for in the text, *Methods in Caribbean research: Literature, discourse, culture* edited by Lalla, Roberts, Walcott-Hackshaw and Youssef (2013). However, despite the foregrounded question: "What sets the Caribbean apart and justifies an application of scholarly method to its own needs?" (p. 3), the book's focus on largely Caribbean literary discourse, criticism and analysis did not offer substantial insight into or an example of a framework for Caribbean research and analysis. Throughout the text, the extraction and analysis of data were guided by Western approaches, including ethnography, content analysis and discourse analysis. The question then remained, is there a Caribbean-specific research methodology that offers a guideline on engaging in research within and/or related to Caribbean people?

This article focuses on two main social issues, crime and migration, due to their acknowledged influence in shaping the experiences and outcomes of Caribbean people

regionally and overseas. An exploration of the literature indicates the research methodologies used by Caribbean scholars and researchers to study these two issues.

### Migration

Migration remains one of the most researched phenomenon in the Caribbean. Although we cannot claim to know all the reasons for the interest in this area, there are a number of plausible and recognized explanations, not only as to why Caribbean people migrate, but why Caribbean migration holds such interest for researchers and migrants, as well as those in the origin, transition, and destination countries. Some of the reasons given for Caribbean migration include employment and educational opportunities abroad, reduced opportunities at home, family networks and tradition, economic mobility, skills training, and remittances. The interest in researching Caribbean migration appears to be focused on developing and understanding the theories around migration; the nature, volume and rate of migration; the choice of destination countries; the impact on origin and host societies, communities, families and countries; the routes and patterns of migration; the comparative outcomes for migrants in different countries; the changing attitudes, behaviours and identities of Caribbean migrants; and the experience of return migration. The Caribbean region is as diverse as the reasons we migrate or the reasons we try to understand it, and this article acknowledges the continued attention to Caribbean migration. However, the authors have a different interest in this phenomenon. We are interested in how Caribbean migration has been studied by researchers and academics. There are two primary reasons for this. One, as we have noted earlier, Caribbean migration is one of the most researched areas of Caribbean peoples. Two, we believe that how we investigate and seek to understand one of the region's most significant occurrences can assist us with obtaining authentic and trustworthy data.

### Crime

The persistent, and in some instances rising levels, of crime have been attributed to particular types of crime that have spread across national boundaries. These include human trafficking, organized crime, drug trafficking, money laundering, and more recently, lottery scamming. A recent study conducted by the Inter-American Development Bank (2017) classified the Caribbean as having the highest rate of violent crime globally. Crime in the Caribbean region has tarnished the region's image and subsequently eroded the confidence of existing and potential investors. Of particular importance are the effects of crime on tourism, which is arguably the main foreign exchange earner for most of the region, alongside remittances (McCatty & Serju, 2006). Furthermore, the relatively high incidences of violent crime have been found to contribute to an increased spending on security measures by various stakeholders (Inter-American Development Bank, 2017).

Migration and crime are just two of the many social impacts on the Caribbean region. Central to addressing

these issues is the need to have an in-depth understanding, through research, of the drivers, related factors and groups at risk. This positions research as a systemic and strategic process that informs the development and growth of the region. It is recognized that much research has been undertaken over the years by various governments, policy makers, practitioners and scholars to address their various social concerns. The question remains: Are the appropriate research methodologies being used to investigate these issues and include citizens as a part of the transparency, accountability and partnership required in the process of change? For example, the use of participatory methods is globally accepted as one research tool in working with people-centred development. The participatory method emerged in the 1970s as a western response to the criticisms of a traditional top-down approach to development (Campbell, 2002).

Despite the noted benefits, particularly as it surrounds a more inclusive approach to community development, we are still led to ask, “Has this and other Western research methods been the best approach to understanding and addressing Caribbean social issues?” Arising from this was the need to identify existing Caribbean-specific research methodologies that have been used for, or have the potential to research issues within the Caribbean. The recognized gap in literature that documents established and promoted Caribbean research approaches, incited the need to go further to examine the tools being employed by Caribbean scholars whether locally or in the Diaspora. The following section describes the methods utilized in identifying and examining the research approaches utilized by scholars undertaking research within or on the Caribbean.

## Method

The aim of this article is to identify and examine the research methodologies being used by postgraduate scholars to understand social issues, particularly crime and migration, within the Caribbean or facing Caribbean people within the region and/or the diaspora. The areas of Caribbean migration that were reviewed focus on the impact of migration on Caribbean culture and identity, and employment-related migration as these two areas seemed to be a major focus of studies on Caribbean migration as well as that it encompasses almost all aspects of Caribbean migration. A distinction was made between crime and violence, conceptualizing crime to encompass more macro-level incidences of crime that had direct implications for the social and economic stability of countries, and by extension the larger region. On the other hand, violence was defined as occurring more at the micro- to meso-levels, and would include incidences of domestic violence, gender-based violence and violence in schools. This delineation and choice to focus on crime as a more social/structural issue does not diminish or minimize the importance of violence as a national issue for many countries.

A systematic review was conducted of master’s and doctoral studies on Caribbean migration and crime in the region, with the focused aim of critically analysing the

methodologies employed to understand these social issues. The rationale for this was based on the assumption that any new developments in research methodologies would utilize the ambit of doctoral studies in order to demonstrate originality, as well as to utilize the creativity and the testing of new ground without expectation of criticism and reference to cited material and the possibility of non-acceptance by peer reviewed academic journals. The studies are obtained from the Proquest database for theses and dissertations, an internationally available website that provides access to such material in the English language. The West Indian Collection of the University of the West Indies, Mona was also used to access those dissertations and theses conducted within the region, albeit by scholars affiliated to the university. Furthermore, the theses and dissertations are drawn from the period 2007–2017. This decade long selection is to cover a reasonable period of time and a larger quantity of information. Studies carried out during this period are also more likely to indicate the research methodology in their abstracts and to detail this in a separate chapter of the thesis than theses and dissertations written prior to the 1990s.

The main limitation of accessing theses and dissertations through Proquest was it was not certain from the studies whether the authors are of Caribbean heritage or residing in the Caribbean, despite the subject matter focusing strongly on the Caribbean. This is an important consideration as it is more likely that those resident in the Caribbean or having lived for a significant period of their lives in the Caribbean may be aware of practices akin to a potential (or established) indigenous Caribbean approach. It is possible, however, that the authors may be those residing in Caribbean communities in those countries and thus aware of these practices.

The studies are reviewed under the following headings—type of study, theoretical framework, research design, methodological framework, and research method. The type of study outlines where the research was carried out and the specific focus of the research. Theoretical frameworks are defined here as the philosophical approach to the study by the respective author, that is, the way in which the author theorizes about how the study is seen by them. The author’s approach to the subject under study is held to be framed by their own world views on the context that informs and gives rise to how the author understands the study and the research question, and thus frames the study in accordance with that view.

### *Findings 1: methodologies used in qualitative studies on Caribbean migration*

*Type of study.* Although some of the studies were conducted at research sites in the Caribbean islands, most focused on Caribbean migrants and thus the research was located in Caribbean populated cities of Canada and the United States such as Toronto and New York and often Florida. As one would expect, the cities hosting the universities in which the students were enrolled were typically the research location. The topics researched were quite varied. For example, Richardson’s (1991)

study questioned whether the traditional approach to studying migration behaviour can explain the migratory process of African Caribbean migrants to Canada. Teague's (2015) contextual look at the historical migration of African-Caribbean migrants and African American southerners to New York City in the early 20th century analysed the peasants' and workers' wages, labour, landownership and political engagement with a comparative look at the processes and effects of their migration.

A 2010 study by Gomes on how deportation from the USA back to the Caribbean islands of Trinidad and Tobago affected the quality of life for 19 female deportees utilized a feminist lens of intersectionality to argue the necessity of adopting a gendered perspective to frame immigration policies. Perry (2007) looked at how race structured the experiences of African Caribbean migrants to Britain and denied their access to the opportunities entitled to them through citizenship. Crawford (2009) investigated the matrifocal experiences of Caribbean migrant mothers to Canada and the nature of their transnational mothering.

*Theoretical framework.* The studies covered a range of theoretical frameworks notably respective to the theoretical era in which the study was written. Earlier studies were informed by the more traditional theoretical frameworks of positivism and interpretivism, not expressly stated in some cases but evidenced in the approach to how the study was carried out. Contemporary theoretical frameworks such as intersectionality and racialology were used to inform the more recent studies. As several studies focused on gendered migration, in particular with women, the theoretical frameworks of feminist theory and narrative analysis were employed. Other theoretical frameworks were underpinned by the studies' own topics and emphasis, for example, the relationships between migrant and origin families were framed by kinship theory. Other common theoretical frameworks were racial consciousness and grounded theory with the latter also used as a method of data collection and analysis.

A political economy framework of historical materialism and Black feminist theories were employed by Diamond (2015) to understand Caribbean women migrants' experiences of New York and how intersections of gender, race, and class impact these experiences. Richardson (1991) used a humanistic approach in geography to argue that the traditional models of migration for Caribbean peoples were not adequate. Sociological theories including Durkheim's theory of organic solidarity, structural functionalism, symbolic interactionism and agency versus structure were utilized by Douglas-Harrison (2014) to explore the phenomena of Caribbean women who migrate from Jamaica and leave behind their usually male partners in a permanent marital arrangement.

Gomes' (2010) study of Trinidad female deportees was framed within the context of critical theory to examine the US Immigration Reform Act and its impact on deportation.

Crawford's (2009) use of grounded theory through a feminist-intersectional lens of gender, race and class challenged the European middle-class sexual division of labour and was informed by personal interviews with 18 African Caribbean women. Crawford's contestation prompts us to consider the following: If we can challenge long held theories on parenting to present a more accurate account of the realities taking place then we need to put forward a similar challenge of our traditional use of Western methodologies which may be similarly inappropriate for understanding and researching Caribbean peoples.

*Methodological/research strategy.* Most of the studies employed either a quantitative or qualitative strategy to investigate and answer the research question. Studies that were macro in nature and longitudinal in design were more likely to be quantitative as the use of quantifiable data showed emerging patterns and trends in migratory phenomena such as remittances, net migration rates, and number of migrant nurses. Research concerned with the symbolic interactions between individuals or families, or the construction of identity for Caribbean migrants or returning Caribbean migrants, were typically qualitative intending to provide the richness of detail that accompanied the accounts shared by the participants. There was an increasing number of studies that used a mixed method methodology employing both quantitative and qualitative strategies to examine the phenomenon of Caribbean migration. The rationale for the mixed-method approach appeared to be similar for those studies employing the two strategies singularly, that is to identify patterns and trends and to find out the reasons and motivations for those trends from those connected to or impacted by it.

Douglas-Harrison's (2014) exploratory qualitative study investigating marriage and migration employed interviews and participant observation to capture the real-life experiences of transnational couples and understand the motives and meanings behind their actions and behaviours. Douglas-Harrison collected data from a snowball sample starting with participants who were known to the researcher and thus enabling the more personal discussions around sexual relations and "personal business". Wynter's (2001) investigation into Jamaican labour migration to Cuba between 1885 and 1930 highlighted that Caribbean migrants traditionally possessed an oral culture, but migration prompted the need to increase written communication in order to maintain contact with relatives and friends. The personal narratives obtained from 10 Black Jamaican women in an interactive group interview combined with an auto-ethnographic account by Wilson (2002) attempted to show how these African-Caribbean women struggled to resist dominant racial ideologies.

Seitz (2005) and Forsythe-Brown (2007) used a mixed or multi-method approach to understand, respectively, how identity was expressed among native-born Belizeans and in response to immigration from other Central American countries, and the transnational kinship ties and the impact of gender and kin on kin work among Caribbean migrants and their origin-based families. Seitz used secondary quantitative data

including census and government archives along with qualitative in-depth interviews. Forsythe-Brown utilized quantitative data from the National Survey of American Life in conjunction with semi-structured individual interviews and two group interviews.

**Research design.** The studies employed a range of research designs based on the research question and what the author intended to find out. Case studies or ethnographic designs were more common in studies where the researcher sought to investigate micro level aspects of migration such as the contribution of Caribbean fathers to their children's upbringing. Studies that relied on quantitative data more often used survey or longitudinal designs.

A case study design was used by Richardson (1991) to determine the experiences of five African Caribbean migrants to Canada. The participants' life histories were obtained from personal interviews with them in their homes. Observations such as listening to the music they played or the type of literature displayed in their home alerted the researcher as to what was important in their traditions and culture. Bacchus' (2012) participants in a qualitative study of Indo-Guyanese students about their life experiences and cultural traditions in the USA were recruited through snowball sampling and an online listserv. Wilson (2002) used a feminist theoretical framework in her ethnographic study to show how African-Jamaican women resisted assimilation to define themselves in their own way and maintain ties to their country of origin.

**Research method.** As the authors expected, the research method used to collect data reflected the research strategy, that is whether quantitative or qualitative, the focus of the research, and the type of information that was required. Statistical or quantitative data were collected from surveys or retrieved from records and archives held by a number of sources including governments, institutions and organizations. Qualitative research involving case studies or ethnography employed research methods such as participant observation, semi-structured interviews or focus groups.

Diamond (2015) carried out interviews with Caribbean women migrants living in New York to create a narrative picture of their post migration experiences. Questionnaires were designed to obtain information on Caribbean migrant nurses in New York who migrated to the city between 1950 and 1980. About half of the questionnaires were posted out, while the other half were administered during personal visits by the researcher. The sample population was obtained from health institutions and nursing organizations. Burgess' (1989) exploratory study on status change among English-speaking Caribbean nurses in New York was obtained through field work and personal narratives. Francis' (2012) qualitative study utilized a cross-sectional method to interview eight female Caribbean migrants living in New York, Houston, and Washington DC about their health perceptions and health experiences. The interviews were analysed thematically using standard qualitative analytical methods.

In-depth interviews and ethnographic participant observation were used by Bacchus (2012) to understand how

second-generation Indo-Guyanese young people selected aspects of their culture to negotiate their identity in New York. Bacchus held conversational interviews with the respondents, most of whom were university or college students, and conducted field and participant observations alongside the conversations. Bacchus noted that it was important to establish a rapport with the participants and to gain their trust in order to be invited to the students' homes and family events and learn about their cultural expectations.

**Data analysis.** The quantitative studies were analysed through the use of inferential statistics to make inferences about a larger population based on the sample population. The sample populations in the quantitative studies were typically large and random using probability sampling methods. The qualitative studies used non-probability sampling most typically purposive and snowball sampling. The data from these studies were typically analysed thematically, by narrative analysis or grounded theory.

There were a few studies where interviews were described as conversations and the researchers sought to obtain information in as natural an environment as possible. In summary, the research methodologies that framed the studies, apart from those based in the Caribbean or involving Caribbean peoples, were found to be lacking theoretical approaches and research methods that reflected Caribbean ways of interacting and knowing. This article proposes that, particularly with qualitative research, a more authentic sharing of information and thus more accurate and trustworthy data resulting in more useful, effective and applicable solutions and outcomes could be obtained through the use of a research methodology reflective of Caribbean people's everyday practices, behaviours and worldviews.

## **Findings 2: methodologies used in qualitative studies on crime in the Caribbean**

**Type of study.** The initial topic search yielded a broad range of results that needed to be further narrowed to maintain the specific focus on the Caribbean, as distinct to the frequent pairing with Latin America. The selected studies largely focused on crime occurring within the Caribbean, though a few of the studies established patterns of crime overseas that were traceable to the Caribbean. For instance, Fraser (2010) acknowledged the general tendency to associate delinquency and crime among Black male youth in Toronto, Canada, with the pattern of fatherlessness attributed to Caribbean families. She extended this discourse by noting that these issues were also attributed to Caribbean mothers migrating or leaving their children for extended periods, thereby leading to the disenfranchisement of youth, and subsequently the outcome of incidences of crime and delinquency.

Overall, the theses and dissertations were found to reflect a blend of macro and micro level analyses. Macro issues related to understanding the impact of social, structural, policy or political factors on crime, while micro-level

analyses focused on understanding the experiences or perceptions of crime affecting particular groups or communities. An example of a macro level study is Mayne's (2015) dissertation that examined the effects of crime on tourism development in Jamaica. Historical analyses were not common but noted for Cockayne (2015) who provided a historical analysis of organized crime for the period 1859–1968.

Issues of class or race were found to intersect at various junctures within some studies. This interrelation was due in part to the linkage between crime and socio-economic status. There were some studies that either focused on class groupings as the subject of the study or referred to the association with class as a part of their theoretical analysis. Race was less consistent but noted to emerge in studies within Trinidad and Guyana, countries identified as having distinct racial populations. Racial distinctions were also evidenced in studies outside the Caribbean such as the United States and Canada.

**Theoretical framework.** The theories cited by postgraduate students were framed predominantly by traditional or classical theories reflective of Western ideologies. For instance, Richards (2000) utilized neo-Classical and Radical theories of crime in the analysis of the relationship between socio-economic status and crime. An exception to the pattern of using these traditional theories was Bailey's (2004) study which included a discussion of Oscar Lewis' notion of the culture of poverty to explain crime as a cultural tendency. Bailey's theoretical discourse, however, further extended to include sociological theories found within the Chicago School, recognized to shape many of the dominant ideas within the sociological discipline.

In some instances, acclaimed theoretical frameworks were used as the basis for evaluating their relevance or applicability to some Caribbean countries. For example, Knights (2014) examined the applicability of the theory of collective efficacy in the design and execution of community-based crime prevention in Trinidad and Tobago. Also, Morris (2010) explored the relevance of the social disorganization theory and defended the neighbourhood perspective in understanding homicide in the Jamaican social context. Importantly, none of the theories utilized by Knights or Morris were Caribbean-specific.

Theories were also found to be consistent with the methodological approach utilized in a given study. For instance, a grounded theory study would be guided by an established grounded theorist especially as this helps to shape the entire research process of data collection, coding and analysis.

**Methodological/research strategy.** The studies that were reviewed utilized a range of qualitative (E. Adams, 2010; Y. Adams, 2016), quantitative (Green, 2016; Richards, 2000) and mixed-methods (Bailey, 2004; Knights, 2014) approaches. There was also a variation in the use of primary and secondary data, though the former was more common across the studies identified. Anglin (2011) drew largely on secondary data such as published reports, statistical data or any other material that contributed historical data in his assessment of the role of the church in helping to

reduce the rate of crime and violence in Jamaica. As expected, the sample size for studies involving a quantitative design was significantly larger than the sample size noted for qualitative studies.

**Research design.** There was a tendency towards the more traditional research designs such as phenomenology, ethnography, case studies and historical research. Y. Adams (2016) utilized a phenomenological approach to assess the lived experiences of police in cross-jurisdictional collaboration in the Caribbean. The strength of this chosen approach was noted to be the focus on people's lived experiences of a phenomenon or their life-world, which thereby enabled the author to construct an interpretive understanding of the nature of Caribbean police cross-jurisdictional collaboration efforts.

Ethnography was often used to provide an in-depth yet critical understanding of a community or group in relation to crime and violence. Geer (2011) employed an ethnographic approach to investigate how interactions of crime, government inaction and migration impact the experiences and lifestyle choices of upper-middle-class and upper-class Trinidadians.

Quantitative studies focused on measuring difference or correlations between a predetermined set of variables. For example, Green (2016) included the use of a scale—the Green JA-AM CPQ scale—to measure the participants' perception of crime across two populations.

**Research method.** Again, the research methods used in the studies on crime were found to be consistent with their respective research approaches or methodologies. Thus, in-depth interviews were common for those studies adopting a research framework such as phenomenology and critical theory, while participant observation was cited within ethnographic studies. E. Adams (2010) included newspaper articles, photographs and music lyrics as tools that aided in her understanding of her participants' perceptions and experiences of crime and violence. Geer (2011) paired her use of participant observation with oral life histories and informal interviews in her ethnographic study. Informal interviews were described as being more organic thereby allowing a discussion to unfold more naturally.

Research reflexivity was identified as occurring across a range of qualitative research approaches. For instance, E. Adams (2010) utilized a field journal to assist in her process of self-reflexivity throughout her fieldwork, which was further evidenced in the incorporation of reflections throughout her dissertation.

**Data analysis.** Thematic analysis was quite common for studies adopting a qualitative design. This meant that techniques involving a focus of established patterns, data saturation and theme redundancy were often evident.

Data analysis in studies utilizing a quantitative design was often guided by hypotheses testing of correlations between variables. Green's study (2016) included crime rate, income level, marital status and other key demographic variables in comparing Jamaican and Black American

perceptions of violent crimes. Chosen tests of analysis included the t-test, Chi-square contingency test and the Mann Whitney test. Mayne (2015) extended these analytical tools to incorporate trend and multiple regression analysis to investigate the relationship between violent crimes and tourist arrivals in Jamaica for the period 2003–2012.

## Discussion

The analysis shows that there is growing interest in researching social issues occurring within the Caribbean. This interest does not lie solely within the region, but extends to the Diaspora and other nationals interested in the region's survival and development. This speaks to the increased awareness of and interest in Caribbean globally. Yet, the question remains, "Do the ways in which these studies have been conducted give enough attention to or acknowledgement of a Caribbean perspective or an understanding of the region's unique socio-cultural, historical and economic experience?"

Our research revealed the absence of any reference to, engagement with, or commitment to the development of a Caribbean research methodology. In some instances, the term methodology was used to describe particular methods of data collection rather than provide a framework for guiding the overall design, analysis and presentation of findings of the study. Even in those instances where Caribbean methods were discussed, we found that the methods were not "Caribbean" but were adapted to conduct research in the Caribbean or with Caribbean peoples. Caribbean feminism emerged as the only explicit and clearly defined research theoretical framework that was developed in response to the Caribbean context, albeit as an extension of the broader international feminist movement. Though some research seemingly drew on this methodological approach, the topics were not related to migration or crime which were the focus of this article.

None of the studies identified in this article adopted a Caribbean-specific research methodology, presumably because there is none available or recorded and, as such, have relied on Western research approaches. Among those identified were ethnography, discourse analysis and case studies. It is difficult for us to assume the rationale for this choice, but we acknowledge that its use may be related to its acceptability as already established approaches and the absence of a culturally relevant research methodology specific to Caribbean contexts. We recognized that qualitative studies gave greater attention to the attempt to examine social issues from a local lens. Though this was not achieved, the effort highlights the space within qualitative research for developing and/or formalizing Caribbean research methodologies.

### *Approaching Caribbean research as an indigenous methodology*

The notion of having a Caribbean-specific research methodology is parallel to the arguments presented in defence of indigenous methodologies. Indigenous methodologies

were birthed to counter Western ideologies and research approaches. Thus, indigenous research is often classified as decolonizing and self-determining. The term "indigenous" is however contested or questioned by some given the apparent all-encompassing grouping of populations with very different experiences of imperialism (Smith, 2012). Nonetheless, the term affords an opportunity for a common identity on the premise of similar experiences of colonization. As Smith (2012) further noted,

the world's indigenous populations belong to a network of peoples. They share experiences as peoples who have been subjected to the colonization of their lands and cultures, and the denial of their sovereignty, by a colonizing society that has come to dominate and determine the shape and quality of their lives, even after it has formally pulled out. (p. 7)

Adopting an indigenous approach to conducting research ensures that research is culturally specific, relevant, safe and respectful of the worldviews and practices of the indigenous group (Singh & Major, 2017). Yet, the use of the term indigenous in the context of the Caribbean, is challenged by the historical annihilation of large numbers of Caribs, Arawaks and Tainos—indigenous people of the region who were subsequently replaced by groups from other continents who were deemed capable of serving the economic interests of the Europeans. This does not deny the survival of descendants of indigenous peoples in certain Caribbean countries, such as the Caribs (as exemplified by two authors of this paper) and the Garifuna people of Belize. Thus, the current demographic composition of the region is mostly reflective of the process of artificial replacement through slavery and indentureship (Baksh-Soodeen, 1994). Given this history of conquest and replacement, it may become necessary to reconceptualize the term "indigenous" to include the importation and adaptation of Caribbean peoples who recognize and claim the region as their home, despite deeply held and strongly marked traces of ancestry to foreign lands.

Following this, the argument for a Caribbean research methodology correlates with the justification underpinning indigenous methodologies such as the Kaupapa Maori and Talanoa research methodologies. Talanoa was developed as a research methodology for use in Pacific contexts (Otunuku, 2011; Prescott, 2008). The practice is commonly understood in several Pacific island nations including Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Niue, Hawaii, the Cook Islands and Tonga, though carried out in ways specific to the different Pacific Islands. Talanoa describes the conversations in which people are engaged and allows for group conversations to develop over a considerable period of time with the focus on the interests of the participants (Halapua, 2002; Vaioleti, 2003). Importantly, the acceptance and use of this approach by Pacific and international academics and researchers as a valid research methodology has enhanced the quality of research by and about Pacific peoples. Similarly, Kaupapa Maori was developed specifically to understand the lives of Maori (*tangata whenua* - indigenous people of Aotearoa New Zealand), from an indigenous perspective, thereby disrupting the dominance of traditional Pakeha worldviews.

Kaupapa Maori approach to research challenges the colonial sites of power and control over research and the dominance of traditional, individualistic research which benefits the researchers and their agenda. Kaupapa Maori research is collectivistic and takes for granted the ‘social, political, historical, intellectual and cultural legitimacy of Maori people’ (Bishop, 1999, p.2). Within this approach, it is acknowledged that Maori ways to access and define knowledge existed prior to European arrival in Aotearoa New Zealand. The African Oral Tradition of Storytelling is another example of an indigenous approach that is embedded within the African oral tradition. Here stories are told in a particular style, emphasizing certain aspects of the story while ignoring others with the intent of expressing passion or building an argument (Mnyandu, 1997). Storytelling enables the recording and expressing of feelings, attitudes, and responses from one’s lived experiences and environment (Gbadegesin, 1984). It is a communal experience in which people come together to listen and take part in the telling of stories about past deeds, beliefs, wisdom, counsel, morals, taboos, and myths (Chuka, n.d). Research studies have used African oral storytelling not only to collect data, but to design research with African migrant communities (Adelowo, 2012; Carter-Black, 2007; Tuwe, 2015).

Caribbean forms of socialization offer a credible space in which research with Caribbean people can occur. The sites at which persons may meet have the potential to evolve into spaces in which social meaning is constructed, evaluated and shared, and lasting relationships are formed. These sites may be casual (such as an individual’s home) or it may extend to more established settings (such as Woodford Square in Trinidad and Tobago). This Caribbean way of knowing was found to be akin to yarning which is defined as “an informal and relaxed discussion through which both the researcher and participant journey together visiting places and topics of interest relevant to the research study” (Bessarab & Ng’andu, 2010, p.38). The main feature of this process is the formation of enduring relationships which then become the vehicle for sharing information, constructing meaning, and influencing change.

Overall, central to these research approaches is a resistance to traditional Euro-Western ideologies that taint the lens of the observer and create power imbalances that deny the researched a true representation of their stories and experiences. This process gives credence to local ways of knowing, building networks and collaborating for social change. It removes the outsider dominance through the self-assigned label of expert, and reveres the knowledge and expertise of the insider, that is, the locals who live and thereby understand through their daily experiences. Thus, the resistance to or decolonization of Euro-Western approaches must entail “a process of conducting research in such a way that the worldviews of those who have suffered a long history of oppression and marginalization are given space to communicate from their frames of reference” (Chilisa, 2012, p. 14). At the forefront of a pursuit to research, understand and address any Caribbean social issue are the questions: Whose reality counts? Whose

values matter? Who is the source of knowledge? Our response—Caribbean people themselves.

### *Exploring the need for a new Caribbean way of knowing*

In Caribbean academia, research methodologies have consistently defaulted to Western methodological frameworks despite their arguable disconnect from the Caribbean habitus of encountering and engaging. The diversity of peoples in the Caribbean region as a result of colonization, slavery and indentureship require an understanding of the varieties of cultures and language (Mendes, 2014) and of Caribbean peoples’ ways of knowing and sharing knowledge.

This article questions the continued use of Western methodologies by Caribbean researchers to conduct research in Caribbean settings and with Caribbean peoples, and argues for a more appropriate methodological framework for borrowing and sharing information and guiding how research specific to Caribbean contexts are designed and carried out. Although the Caribbean has many forms and types of engagement and sharing of knowledge as there are different peoples, histories and languages, we often look to Liming and Ole talk as one manner of engagement that is a culturally relevant way of carrying out research. Liming takes place in a number of countries within the Caribbean, though different terminologies are used depending on the country to describe this type of engagement (e.g. *bemberria* in Dominican Republic, *janguero* in Puerto Rico, *par* or *lyme* in Jamaica). In Cuba, the names appear to be in accordance with whether food is shared (*comidita*), people get together to sing accompanied by a guitar (*descarga*), or just coming together to relax (*compartir*). Ole talk has been recognized by many scholars and writers as a uniquely Caribbean way of engaging with each other in small or large groups. In Trinidad and Tobago in particular, ole talk is traditionally associated with encounters of leisure and gossip. Scholars such as Cudjoe (1997) have noted the capacity of ole talk “to create new spaces for historic possibilities” and some writers (Miller & Slater, 2000) have observed the use of ole talk to obtain and share information in qualitative settings. Liming offers an opportunity for social integration (Clarke & Charles, 2012) and provides a culturally relevant purpose, environment and space in which ole talk can take place. This provides opportunities for social and political discussions, and for building community which can further result in both personal and social change.

The ongoing process of “ole talk”, with its questions, answers and inquiring by others forms an integral part of understanding the unfolding lives and perspectives of others. Liming provides the context and space in which ole talk takes place. It can best be described as an organic, sometimes spontaneous or drawn together gathering of people who are aware of the nuances, norms and protocols that accompany a lime. Liming and ole talk is proposed, not only for its naturalness in stimulating and soliciting



discussion and sharing information but for framing and shaping how the research is carried out.

This new approach to qualitative research involves the construction of regionally relevant theoretical frameworks that are germane to Caribbean socio-historic realities (Arneaud & Albada, 2013). These frameworks allow an in-depth insight to the knowledge and realities of “limers” which are often situated within their local, socio-economic and cultural contexts. As Silverman (2006) suggests, “by analyzing how people talk to one another, one is directly gaining access to a cultural universe and its content of moral assumptions” (p. 108).

## Conclusion

The validity of research methodologies, whether employed to investigate a particular phenomenon, address an issue pertinent to a community, or identify aspects of our society or well-being, is crucial to gaining a true, honest and accurate understanding of the study. In the Caribbean, a region as diverse as the many challenges confronting it, there remains an acknowledgement of our Caribbean identity, culture and practices. However, our Caribbean ways of knowing and “finding out”, remain excluded from the higher levels of academia and government. It is at this level that most research on issues relevant to the Caribbean are carried out utilizing research methodologies that are foreign to our lived experiences but on which we place undue reliance and credibility. How much more would we know of our Caribbean world if it were explored through Caribbean ways of researching and knowing? Liming and ole talk are suggested as one such research methodology in a region as varied and vibrant as the Caribbean, in which there are bound to be more. This article is calling for all of us involved in research with Caribbean peoples and contexts to explore, consider and utilize methodologies that reflect the sense of “who we be” to obtain a truer picture of “who we are” and thus, a more effective approach to addressing our issues and concerns.

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