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Caribbean liming: A metaphor for building social capital

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Abstract

This study explores the metaphorical concept of liming, its origins and role in building social relations and creating a social identity and the fabric for society in the Caribbean. We integrate Caribbean liming with the theory of social capital, and in particular with social relationships. We highlight the importance of common community norms and their influence on the potential for liming to build networks, trust, information and communication exchange, social cohesion, political empowerment and collective action to create greater social capital. In this study we emphasize that the cultural context of the Caribbean limits the opportunity for bridging gaps in relationship networks and fosters bonding in the community. This study highlights observations on liming and social capital by reporting secondary data and primary interview data analyses, and concludes with a discussion of the rebranding of regional telecommunications provider, Cable & Wireless, as LIME, building on the liming metaphor.

Introduction

One of the central tenets of social capital theory relates to the issue of dyadic relationships and the existence of structural holes in networks (Burt, 1992; Coleman, 1990). In his discussion of social capital Coleman is concerned primarily about the aggregate welfare of a group, relating to the

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development of community social capital, and hence highlights the importance of closure between individuals. From this point of view the creation of community social capital is likely to be focused on closure of voids between individuals. In comparison, the opposite point of view sees voids between individuals as presenting opportunities for gains through arbitrage, furthering the creation of individual social capital (Burt, 1992, 2005). By extension, we think it is clear that research findings regarding the creation and usage of social capital will depend to a large extent on the cultural context of study. In cultures where there are strong social norms pressuring individuals to conform, arbitrating across structural holes will create negative effects for the participants. In cultures where strong social norms relate to the ability to be individualistic, arbitrating across structural holes will be lauded.

In this paper we examine the cultural context in the West Indies geographic region (referred to as the Caribbean hereafter) bearing in mind that different island countries structure their own societies with country-specific social norms, while sharing a common sense of being part of the West Indian community. To illustrate this duality of community we use the cultural metaphor of liming, which has spread across the region (and beyond) in the last 60 years and in the process has changed in level of formality and usage. We present the theory related to social capital, with particular emphasis on social relations, and then move to a discussion of the concept of liming and position this concept within the domain of social capital theory. We present the importance of common community norms and their influence on the potential for liming to build networks and social capital.

In our concluding discussion we relate the importance of common community norms and liming to the ultimate development of political and social leadership. In the literature on leadership, the importance of cultural context is widely accepted (Hofstede, 2001; House et al., 2004), with empirical studies generally supporting the concept that cultural background is commonly found to have a pervasive influence on leader behaviours (Van Emmerik et al., 2008). By linking community social capital with leadership development we set the parameters for proposed further empirical research on this relationship in the Caribbean.

In the next section we present the theoretical background for the paper with the concept of social relations and social capital, and then present our discussion of the liming metaphor. We follow with observations on liming and social relations, reporting secondary data and primary interview data analyses, and finally conclude with our discussion and the example of the rebranding of LIME and the building of the liming metaphor.

Literature review

Social relations and social capital

Human behaviour in the spheres of economics, politics and society is embedded in the context of social relations. To an extent social relations can help ensure trustworthiness, and can create networks, both strong (family and friendships) and weak (acquaintances). Social relations can dictate the direction of economic behaviour both at the individual and organizational level (Burt, 1992), ease the exchange of fine-grained information (Uzzi, 1997), ensure access to new information (Burt, 1992) and enhance power (Brass, 1984). All of which have implications for individuals' wellbeing, social welfare and ultimately performance.

Galaskiewicz (2007) points out that these social relations are more accurately described as social capital when they have the potential to mobilize resources for individual or collective purposes (Lin, 2001). The structure of social relations is itself embedded in larger cultural, political, ecological and

societal contexts and cannot be considered a part of social capital until the society develops the ability to cultivate and use social relations in a constructive manner. Social relations thus are a part of the concept of social capital which itself encompasses a richer definition and includes elements of networks, trust, collective action, information and communication, social cohesion and political empowerment (Woolcock and Narayan, 2000).

Scholars describe social relations as part of a triumvirate, together with structural and cognitive dimensions, forming the concept of social capital (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998; Pisano et al., 2007). Dense social networks (Lipnack and Stamps, 1999) or structural networks form the basis for social capital (Stam and Elfring, 2008). Structural holes in networks which individuals may bridge provide a rich source of benefits through arbitrage (Burt, 1992, 1997). Cognitive social capital, naturally tending to the intangible and subjective, refers to implicitly shared codes of communication, beliefs, norms, attitudes, reciprocity and the level of trust that predisposes an individual towards mutually beneficial behaviour. Building on structural and cognitive dimensions, relational social capital points to the positive outcomes of these connections. Relational social capital refers to the acquisition of information and resources leveraged from personal and direct relationships that have been developed through a history of interactions (Granovetter, 1983, 2005; Sandefur and Laumann, 1998).

The socio-psychological aspects of a relationship, primarily focusing on mutual trust and commitment (Smith and Lohrke, 2008) and founded on common beliefs, collaboration and mutual interest (Hill, 1990), lead to building relational social capital, based on strong dyadic ties (Granovetter, 1983, 2005). As individuals then increasingly develop weak dyadic ties, outside of their close relationships and based on cognitive trust, these provide greater assistance for economic or political ends. In the absence of strong ties, non-redundant information can be accessed through the network and create opportunities. However if there are repeated interactions then contacts can be alienated by the appearance of short-term gains other people derive from information the contact has provided. Thus, from a rational choice perspective, the decision to exploit one's own network holes depends on the potential costs and benefits (Galaskiewicz, 2007). In the presence of trust and respect an environment is created that fosters increased information sharing between parties (Droege et al., 2003; Sporleder and Moss, 2002). Increased communication is often manifested in a higher volume of information transmitted between the parties, such as new sources of data, new contacts or new ideas that allow the individual to perceive new opportunities. Information sharing therefore builds relational capital (Burt et al., 2000; Granovetter, 2005).

Burt (1997) posits that strong ties often have norms of reciprocity attached, contain elements of affection and are thick with resilient trust. Therefore social obligations which are attached to strong ties make it less likely that individuals will tolerate 'hardball' negotiations within the network (Galaskiewicz, 2007). Galaskiewicz argues that the cultural context of the network will make a large difference to the likelihood of the tie generating non-redundant information and hence any positive outcome or action. So if the strong ties are with relatives, friends, neighbors, drinking buddies, work colleagues, bosses or acquaintances, it is less likely that opportunities will be exploited. Lastly, actors must be in a situation where they are free from institutional controls that include bureaucratic oversight and competition in order to exploit opportunities. We can conclude that network effects are more likely in situations where there is an uncertainty surrounding task, role relationships are unclear and there are few alternatives, thus allowing for boundary-spanning roles.

Relational capital is recognized as a useful tool to discourage opportunistic behaviour in environments where formal control mechanisms may be weak (North, 1990). Because relational capital is built from repeated experiences of good and predictable behaviour between individuals, it

creates norms of expected behaviour among partners that reduces the need for costly and time-consuming oversight while increasing the probability of effective performance (Mele, 2003; Woolcock and Narayan, 2000). Therefore the longer a relationship, the stronger the norms of expected behaviour generated will be and thus the lower the fear of opportunism.

Aldrich (1999) adds an evolutionary perspective to the discussion by theorizing that networks do not arise spontaneously but rather develop as a critical mass of players, sharing a common identity, who create a network. In order for the network to be effective, a form of internal governance, either formal or informal, must develop in order to govern the level of contributions of players and mediate the free-rider problem. Thus for a network to become an effective collective actor, problems of internal governance need to be addressed. Following on with this evolutionary concept of networks, the thread leads to the focus on positive social outcomes and social cohesion as a result of the network, and hence the formation of social capital.

A situation has developed in the Caribbean region in which informal networks have become a frequent and regular meeting event and in which a certain amount of formalization of the process and content of the meetings has been implemented. We would posit that these informal social networks now provide a sound base for the forming of relational capital and present an opportunity for the development of social capital to a greater extent than previously.

However, in the event that bonding social capital, which refers to linkages between similar, homogeneous actors, is the primary benefit being created, this might actually crowd out growth (Sabatini, 2008). Several scholars argue that bridging social capital is more likely to lead to facilitating individuals to engage in the pursuit of economic or political actions. Within ethnic or subcultural enclaves there are relatively lower structural barriers for individuals to create a common social identity as compared to the higher structural barriers to expand outside the social enclave. Common bonds can then become a hurdle rather than a source of growth in some cultures. However, if the common community norms dictate that it is inappropriate to capitalize on arbitraging opportunities, then arbitraging will take place infrequently. Therefore the theory of bonding and bridging social capital is subject to the cultural context which will dictate the use of social relationships.

The extensive use of social relationships in the Caribbean region, particularly through the practice of liming, seems to provide an interesting example of the effect of cultural context which we will further explore subsequent to the discussion of the conceptual framework of liming and the initial pilot interviews conducted for this paper. We discuss the liming metaphor and the practice of liming in the next section.

The liming metaphor

This paper examines the history and development of a social activity termed liming. We show that as the idea has become more widely spread geographically and socially, in effect, a previously simple gathering has become more formalized. We discuss the metaphorical concept of liming, its origins and role in building social relations and creating social identity and the fabric for society.

The art of liming

Leisure time is defined as the time which an individual has free from work or other duties and which may be utilized for relaxation and diversion (Moore, 1999). As a way to describe social meetings outside of work, a liming metaphor has become widely used in the Caribbean. The basis for the original use of the term is ambiguous but arguably relates to the fruit, the lime, and may be connected to its use to avoid scurvy. A complementary explanation sets the origin in the 1940s,

relating the word liming to 'limeys', British sailors who frequented bars during the Second World War (originally nicknamed in much earlier times on sailing ships). Originally used in Trinidad and Tobago, the term is currently widely used across the English-speaking Caribbean region.

Eriksen (1990) describes liming as the art of doing nothing which depends on the creating of shared, spontaneous meanings. Liming is an informal activity which occurs in the vacuum of structured social gatherings and a lime is composed of individuals from across racial and social lines meeting without an agenda and outside the work world (Maharajh and Ali, 2004). The widespread use of the term within the British West Indies and elsewhere can be attributed to the growth of communication within the region through improved telecommunications and intra-regional air travel. Pan Caribbean institutions such as the University of the West Indies and the revitalization of the trading bloc, CARICOM, have also contributed to a wider sense of unity throughout the region. As the institutions in each country have matured since independence from the colonial power (primarily Great Britain), so a stronger sense of country and the ability of each country to survive and develop has nurtured a greater regional bonding.

The liming concept serves to reinforce the multiculturalism of the region since the lime serves as a testing ground to measure verbal improvisation and ingenuity woven with a healthy dose of humour, which allows diverse individuals to connect on a deeper level. The aspect of humour is important in Caribbean discourse as it embodies important lessons and truths and the messages that Caribbean folk tales carry (Henke, 2004; Punnett and Greenidge, 2009). Caribbean folk tales are woven with humour and told with a great degree of dexterity, conveying the message that ingenuity can succeed against power, so the tales appeal to the powerless (Punnett and Greenidge, 2009). Henke (2004) demonstrates that the use and appeal of humour in the Caribbean serves to remind the self of its multiple identity sources and becomes the unobtrusive strategy to establish a synthesis. Therefore in the islands that have the greatest levels of diversity and so the strongest competing value systems, verbal dexterity and the use of humour are critical in the good lime (Henke, 2004). This is carried over into the political realm, as the most popular and successful politicians are generally the ones with the gift of verbal improvisation and the humour necessary for the good lime.

Liming builds on the common temporal sensibility in the Caribbean as well, with a focus on the present rather than the future, as is more common in industrialized societies. Henke (2004) considers the lime as a Caribbean form of resistance to the Protestant work ethic described by Weber, for which wasting time is the most serious of sins. Henke (2004) further notes that the collective will of the group guides the development and flow of the lime as opposed to following clock time. Essentially the lime becomes a living, breathing organism with a life of its own and has to end in its own time.

The lime can also be categorized further: the river lime; duck lime; after work lime (Maharajh and Ali, 2004). This notion of the duck (food) lime married with the after work lime is now formalized in three islands, namely Barbados, St Lucia and Grenada, at Oistins, Gros Islet and Gouyave respectively. The term formalized is used loosely here, because liming is an activity that is not subjected to a formal set of rules. A lime by its very nature needs to be natural and allowed to evolve based on the dynamic of the persons in the lime. However the consistent use of place, although not required or formally organized, does constitute a move to formality.

Social class origins

In the past, the activities engaged in for leisure were directly related to one's social class. The elite class engaged in activities such as cricket, horse races and tennis, and belonged to social clubs such

as the Grenada Yacht Club, the Georgetown Club in Guyana and the Grenada Evening Palace (activities included cards, billiards and chess). The women of the elite class focused their leisure time activity on garden parties, tea parties and church fairs. The middle classes frequently tried to emulate the leisure time activity of the elite, however the ability to convert spare time into leisure time faced major monetary and class constraints (Moore, 1999). This gave rise to a number of uniquely Caribbean leisure activities, such as Easter holiday kite flying, Christmas-New Year festivities and the pre-Lenten Carnival which entailed scarcely affordable expenditure on food, drink and dress (costumes).

Historically, the cultural metaphor of liming was widely used primarily by lower, working class males. The use of the term would imply that the individual was not working at that time and therefore not bowing down to the colonial or class system to which the labouring inhabitants of the island countries of the West Indies were subject. For persons who had neither high social status nor money, everyday spare time became filled with liming. Moore (1999: 118) defines liming as 'simply standing or sitting about in the yard, on the street corner, or perhaps at a Portuguese rum shop, chatting, "cussing", drinking and inevitably becoming inebriated and unruly, but also chronically indebted to the Portuguese shopkeeper'. Engaging in and being good at liming was and is regarded as an activity to be proud of and is a strong social value. Being a good limer results in one being held in esteem and may lead to social advancement within the community. In post-colonial Caribbean days (1960s and 1970s) the notion of elite leisure time versus the working class notion of liming continued primarily because class divisions remained. The gradual expansion of the liming concept into other social classes may have occurred as a result of the several periods of recession that the islands have experienced since independence. The lime's utility in building trust and camaraderie among the classes was also probably a necessity due to changes in the workplace and social environment.

In today's businesses, the use and outcomes derived from liming will probably vary based on the business type and the location of the business. Many businesses in the West Indies are foreign-owned and senior managers reserve their energy for socializing with foreign owners, designating someone in middle management to lime with the employees. The recognition of the importance of liming in society results in most companies organizing limes on public holidays and weekends to ensure that worker camaraderie is maintained. The employees utilize the art of liming to create in-groups and out-groups within the organization outside of the company organized limes. Organizational limes should provide a rich source for further research studies.

Spatial development

Originating in Trinidad and Tobago, geographically situated in the southeastern region of the Caribbean, liming was practised predominantly by working class men, who gathered informally in groups to socialize (Eriksen, 1990; Tidwell, 2001). Over the last 20 years the awareness and practice of liming have expanded in depth and breadth, becoming increasingly popular inside Trinidad and across the Caribbean region and acting as a unifier that transcends gender, class, social, ethnic, religious and regional boundaries. Liming is an activity that has grown in the amount of social respect it is held in across societal strata. Liming still occurs outside work time, predominantly in the evenings and on weekends, but as already noted is becoming somewhat more formalized and regular.

The liming concept has spread well beyond the Caribbean now, travelling with the Diaspora as it has spread around the world. In London, England, the Victoria & Albert Museum hosts a Caribbean

Liming Night every September, where the public is invited to learn about the Caribbean via its song, dance and folk tales (Victoria & Albert Museum, 2010). Further examples of the spread of the concept can be easily found on the internet.

Liming and social relations

In a basic sense the lime is about people joining friends for downtime, usually without a specific agenda for the time to be spent. The participants are not actively seeking to network or to build relationships that will lead to a performance outcome. In fact, liming traditionally is an activity that occurs on the fringes of the conventional norms of the economic (workplace or organizational life) or political sphere. Liming has been a pure social relationship concept without formal guidelines for activities or behaviour, but with unspoken rules and roles for the persons in the liming group.

A liming group can be multifaceted in that a group may provide social integration and differentiation not provided by the individuals' careers; so the liming group may cross social lines while at the same time reinforcing these. The unspoken rules actually revolve around the roles played by the persons in the liming group, such as a teller of tall tales, the cook and the barman, the punctuator of the tall tales, the elaborator of the tall tales, the fact checker, the music man and the location man. While there is not an expectation of future rewards, if a reward situation arises then a person's performances in past limes will actually be taken into consideration. Clearly, there is an element of advantage to be obtained from actively playing a positive role in liming. There is social pressure on participants to help build a positive group identity during the lime and negative input on the part of a participant will be viewed poorly and may lead to poor reports about the individual.

While a lime can be both good and bad, depending on the interest it generates among its participants, it is commonly viewed as a positive activity today. The positive, desirable connotations due to the social group meanings created (Patton, 2002) can more widely be related to a solid basis for societal development. An individual who contributes positively to a good lime is likely to be perceived as someone who can also be a positive contributor in general both in the workplace and the political realm. Historically the social milieu surrounding the activity is specifically about enjoying life and not about participating for future gains. However in more recent times, with the development of more regular, formalized limes, we suggest that there is a growing tendency for individuals (politicians especially) to engage in the activity for future rewards such as publicity purposes.

In the next section we illustrate the perceived outcomes associated with the practice of liming, utilizing secondary data observations of political elections and observed political candidate liming behaviour. Following this section we present the results of interviews with business leaders and academics.

Observations on liming and social relations

In this section we discuss the perceived relationship between politics and liming based on observations from available anecdotal commentaries in the popular press. Academic studies on the structure and content of Caribbean politics are limited so far, although more recent work is available. Studies such as that by Punnett and Greenidge (2009) show that island politics is practised on a micro level to the extent that the prime minister has to sanction individual road repair projects before any action can be taken. The members of the in-group reap benefits when their elected ministers serve, so therefore whoever has the largest voting in-group wins the office. In the Caribbean, supporting anecdotal evidence suggests that politicians must win the trust of the electorate via liming

rather than in the formal confines of Parliament, where liming does not take place. This reinforces the point that island politics occurs on a micro level rather than the macro level, where a person's competence would be measured by the wider impact and understanding of their introduced policies by the populace.

Various popular sources making commentaries on Caribbean affairs allude to the influence with the electorate that politicians can create through the liming practice. In the political landscape there is a dearth of reliable public opinion polls and approval rating data. Therefore we posit that the astute political candidate can evoke the desired outcome of election or longevity in office by utilizing liming not only to inform the electorate, but also to glean information and form social relations. The lime for the politician ranges from the simple stop in the 'rum shop' (local bar) at the end of the working day, to an organized 'cricket fete match' (typically on a Sunday with the politician sponsoring the food/drink and possible music for the event). A typical Friday to Sunday activity is public cooking done on the side of the road or at the beach or the riverside, where the food is cooked in a huge pot mounted on three stones with fire below, and the politician and community eat from the same pot.

In the following discussion we give brief examples of perceived successful outcomes for a sample of prominent politicians in Trinidad and Tobago and Grenada. We refer to the competence of politicians being defined as: (1) the successful implementation of policies that lead to sustainable economic growth, increased standards of living, positive social changes and paradigm shifts, and which leave a positive lasting legacy beyond their term in office; (2) garnering the respect of the international community.

Perceived outcomes of liming

In the context of this paper we use a broad assessment of successful outcome, represented by election to or length of term in political office, to illustrate the use of liming to support longevity in island politics. Eriksen (1990) illustrates liming's importance in Trinidad using the example of Prime Minister Dr Eric Williams. According to Eriksen, Dr Williams used liming to ensure that he remained popular with the electorate, resulting in a leadership role that lasted from 1955 to 1981. Dr Williams went so far as to invite European colleagues to come to Trinidad to enjoy the good life; so while he embraced the role of leader and academic (Oxford PhD), Dr Williams was also supported through another important element of culture, music, which is widely prevailing in the lime. During the 1950s and 1960s, leading Calypso writers and performers such as Sparrow used songs to support the work of the government, although during the 1970s this support weakened considerably (Kima, 2010). Dr Williams's physical presence at liming events also clearly contributed to the support for his government.

On the other hand Prime Minister Mr A. N. R. Robinson (London and Oxford graduate) has been subject to ridicule by the press because he seemed to lack an understanding of the basic elements in Trinidadian culture, which includes liming with the electorate (Eriksen, 1990). His competence during his service for five years as Prime Minister, and later as President of Trinidad and Tobago is recognized but his popularity as a politician suffered. Arguably if he had been more involved in the popular activity of liming, and building support among the populace, he might have remained Prime Minister for a longer period. (Note that in this system, the Prime Minister is actively in charge of government.)

Successful outcomes related to politicians' popularity through liming are repeated around the Caribbean. The longest serving elected parliamentarian in Grenada is the Hon. Dr Keith Mitchell,

who also holds the distinction of being the longest serving Prime Minister post-independence. He is an ardent limer among the electorate, liming with the electorate before, during and after an election. Similarly, the Hon. Alleyne Walker, a current minister of government and over time a member of three political parties (The National Party, New National Party and National Democratic Congress) has won his seat each time and so is the second longest serving elected Member of the Parliament. His administrative and policy competence on the job has been called into question by the popular press, as he is also the Member of Parliament who misses the greatest number of parliamentary sessions. He is however a passionate limer; he can be seen liming in his constituency on almost a daily basis and thereby remains popular with the electorate.

The case of Hon. George Brizan illustrates that a brilliant political career can come to an early end in spite of being competent on the job, similar to the fate of Trinidad's Robinson. Brizan was elected for three consecutive terms as a member of two different parties, his portfolio of responsibility included Prime Minister, Minister of Agriculture and Tourism, Education and Youth, Finance, Trade, Industry and Energy. He was seen liming during the election campaign, but was absent after the election. His measure of competency is based on his home-grown Structural Adjustment Programme, which was praised by the IMF and World Bank, ultimately saving the island from facing externally imposed austerity measures (*The New Today*, 2010). The case of Hon. Gregory Bowen is another illustration of a competent administrator, who won his seat twice and has served three terms, and is currently serving as a senator. His practice of liming before the elections and not after has drawn criticism, which may have played in a role in his recent loss in the polls.

The case of Ann David-Antoine is one that illustrates that the party ideology does not always carry a candidate even if the candidate has previously been recognized by the popular press as a competent minister. Recently, David-Antoine ran for election twice and lost the election twice. She is never seen liming with the electorate, therefore it is questionable whether the electorate is familiar with her. The case of Brenda Hood varies slightly in that she won her seat once when her party experienced a landslide victory. Interestingly, she has never won her seat subsequent to that time and she is noted as someone who does not lime with the electorate, before, during or after an election. Two other female politicians, Grace Duncan and Clarice Modeste-Curwen, who are ardent limers with the electorate, have been quite successful in the elections with two and three wins respectively. Unfortunately, Duncan fell from grace and lost the electorate for behaviour unbecoming of a lady in public.

In order to ascertain perceptions of the function of liming we now report on a series of interviews conducted in 2010 with four business leaders and academics from the islands of Trinidad and Grenada on the topic of liming, social relations and social capital. We use identifiers in place of actual names to preserve anonymity.

Conversations about liming

The liming concept. The overarching theme derived from our interviews indicates that liming has key components: the conversation, friends (however loosely defined), escapism from the daily grind and optional food/drink. However, while all respondents agree with this theme, one of the respondents, Respondent B, refers to liming as wasting time on the side of the road or wasting time with friends, which provides persons with a way to deal with stress and a platform to express problems, giving a slightly more negative impression. The other three respondents confirm our definition of liming.

Respondent A defines liming as socializing with friends or even acquaintances without worrying about work or home concerns; usually involving food and alcohol or at least soft drinks. Respondent C defines it as 'hanging out' with good friends, 'ole talking' and generally relaxing and touching base, while Respondent D defines it as getting together with friends on a regular but casual basis – generally for a few drinks and 'old talk' (The 'old talk' is very important!) and simply forgetting the problems of day-to-day living for a while.

The types of lime. The respondents clearly identified that there are several types of liming, as already alluded to earlier in the paper; in addition to the duck lime, river lime and after work lime there is expensive liming done in bars or involving trips abroad (to Miami, etc.); there is also less expensive liming done at home. Basically, Caribbean people hold liming so dear that they are willing to do it in almost any fashion (Respondent A, Respondent C).

The respondents differentiate between impromptu liming and planned liming. Impromptu liming involves individual friends deciding to get together on the spur of the moment in an unplanned manner, not even knowing if each person has any money on them, but willing to pool resources just to take a lime.

Planned liming involves activities such as outfits being purchased, times being synchronized and the venue being chosen. This type of liming is not necessarily more successful – an impromptu lime can sometimes turn out to be the best. Respondent D alludes to the dynamics of the lime by saying that in his opinion the underlying activity is the same, getting together with friends and acquaintances for drinks and 'old talk' – but there might be a particular purpose about a particular lime – that is to cook a pot or a particular event/happening to be discussed (the old talk), or for example a fete match (a friendly game of football or cricket).

The role of liming. Respondent D expounds on the dynamics of the lime by indicating that a lime with the boys and a lime involving the ladies (sic) have distinctively different atmospheres, which results in the lime with the boys being a more regular occurrence. On the other hand Respondent B claims that the pervasiveness of liming in the society is a result of a lack of social activities.

Reinforcing the notion of the lack of formal rules and openness (Eriksen, 1990), Respondent A also notes that there is liming with close friends or family and liming with virtual strangers. When queried about the role that liming plays in the society, Respondent A is of the view that it is the way people wind down from stress; it is the way people avoid stress; it is the way people avoid thinking critically; while Respondent B sees the role of liming as a form of therapy. Respondent C views liming as accounting for the major way in which people 'let off steam', relationships are forged and new trends in clothing, and music and slang are compared and eventually become the trends.

Social relations, social capital and liming in business and politics. Respondent A identifies liming as playing a key role in building social networks. In Caribbean business operations people take a lot less pleasure in work if there is no liming among co-workers, so a business that does not encourage or at least condone some liming will not have happy employees. Liming probably influences the vote and encourages people to vote in island politics. Respondent C outlines the role liming plays in business operations in Trinidad, by saying that many a deal is brokered or at least given a voice in the most casual of situations. The inclusion of alcohol, 'an integral part of the lime', gives rise to a relaxed state, where the parties can feel more inclined to put forth ideas and forge relationships. Many a business card is exchanged when liming. Contacts are made and promises to 'follow up'

the conversation with a phone call are the norm. Generally the liming spot, favourite haunt or what-ever name you give your chosen spot is a more relaxed setting than the formal boardroom.

Respondent C highlights technology's influence on liming and expresses her view on building social networks by saying that persons 'text', 'BBM' and 'Tweet' more often than we realize. It is not uncommon to see a group of limers sitting at a table with a Blackberry (sic) in front of each person. By the end of the night phone numbers have been exchanged, barcodes have been scanned and the person becomes your latest BBM contact or text buddy. No one wants to be left out of the latest craze, and even for older folks, all these technological tools provide a way to keep in touch. I may only meet you once at a bar, but may become your Facebook friend or follow you on Twitter. The influence of modernity on the venerable practice of liming and the art of building social net-works is apparent.

Respondent A claims that she is at a new workplace but has never limed with her colleagues. She feels little connection to them and so thinks that liming could be used for networking and building relationships. Respondent C highlights that liming provides the perfect time to relax, get to know someone better and sift through acquaintances to decide who you would like to either build a professional or personal relationship with or perhaps hook up at another time to exchange ideas. The more often you see someone and engage in casual conversations, the easier it is the next time you meet. Liming is the ultimate icebreaker. In a social setting, your guard is down and one may be much more inclined to try to build trust and show the other person that you are worth including in their social network. Respondent A claims that she would not say she uses liming but perhaps she is more likely to trust someone having limed with them before.

In answer to the suggestion that the lime can be used strictly for informational purposes evokes the response 'inevitably liming does elicit news you may not otherwise have heard but one does not deliberately seek news'. Similarly Respondent C indicates that 'most people use the opportunity to pick up bits of information, but also to communicate something they wish to get out there'. These observations reinforce the notion of information sharing and the building of relational capital (Burt et al., 2000; Granovetter, 2005). Respondent D warns that 'one needs to be very careful of what one hears on those occasions as a lot of gossip, untruths, elaborations circulate whenever a few drinks are consumed'.

The respondents generally believe that liming could be used for building social cohesion in the workplace. Respondent A, with regard to her current workplace, states that if the staff limed now and then they might feel less burdened by the workload, since misery likes company, and it might even lead to group requests for a change in the work environment. Respondent C frames social cohesion in the following way: 'the relaxed atmosphere, the presence of alcohol and the general happy hour feeling goes towards sealing a friendship, making a business connection more solid, or simply showing a more congenial side of yourself that may be more elusive in a working envi-ronment; which is further strengthened by a good lime'.

Respondent A suggests that liming can be used for developing a sense of political empowerment among (perceived) more intelligent friends as well. This respondent perceives that the role that liming plays in establishing a person as a leader and/or follower in society is more likely among men of any class than among women.

The overarching positive outcomes attributed to liming by this respondent group are social cohesion, networking or an opportunity to vent about the stresses of the day and/or life in general. Respondent C stresses that the positive outcomes gleaned from the practice of liming include the fact that social networks are broadened and people are generally made to feel like they belong. 'Liming also affords the participant a chance to observe behavior that may be socially different from

their own, and let's face it – even when we meet someone who may not be to our liking, we have at least looked at life through someone else's eyes. Liming is a wonderful way for people to be themselves' (Respondent C).

The negative outcomes or effects attributed to liming revolve around the fact that sometimes liming is the only thing that people of this region want to do, so productivity suffers as a result (Respondent A). Excessive liming takes away too much from family and work time and too much drinking will have a negative effect on a person's health, work performance and family life (Respondent D). Respondent C stresses the outcome attributed to alcohol consumption, 'as alcohol makes people let down their guard, things can be done or said that would otherwise never be done or said resulting in an embarrassment to your spouse, partner or even superior'.

Overall, these interviews bring out the positive and negative aspects of liming and reinforce the idea that the elements of social capital are developed by liming. The building of social relationships, trust, information exchange and communication, social cohesion and political empowerment and rudimentary but informal collective action are all attributed to take place at the lime. In light of this, we now move to the discussion section, relating the metaphor of liming to social capital development.

Discussion

The discussion of liming in the West Indies as it links to the development of social relations and social capital theory particularly focuses on the concept of bridging and bonding within the cultural context of the Caribbean. We emphasize that the building of common community norms within the framing of the metaphor 'liming' is widely considered to be important for social, political and business reasons. Clearly the lime is an accepted way to build social relations and to develop the elements of social capital; networks, trust, communication and information; collective action; social cohesion, and political empowerment (Woolcock and Narayan, 2000). At the same time, liming is used primarily for building bonding social capital rather than for establishing tenuous links for the building of bridging social capital. Within the limited population of the island societies of the Caribbean, bonding is arguably more socially acceptable than using weak links to arbitrage opportunities.

Our study offers new qualitative and observational evidence that the art of liming serves a multitude of roles. Today, liming is arguably formalized to a greater degree in the region via the development of formal locations, and the introduction of the concept of liming to tourists and other visitors to the islands. Consistent with building bonding social capital two primary centres of liming in the rural areas – the community centre and the rum shop – still provide the venue for the politician to engage with the electorate and partake in the norms of liming: humorous conversational dexterity and the elastic definition of time. While traditionally liming could be seen as a bonding activity, the use of liming by politicians shows evidence that politicians are using liming for opportunistic gain via arbitraging or bridging weak links. Politicians who do not engage in liming seem likely to be less able to gain positive outcomes in the form of winning elections or keeping office. Therefore our findings challenge the view of liming as simply wasting time and hanging out with friends.

A number of important theoretical implications emerge from the analysis of the conversations and observations. First, the study suggests that while cross-class limes exist, the class-specific limes generate greater yields in terms of social cohesion, deal making and business outcomes, while the cross-class limes seem to generate stress relief between co-workers. An example of this phenomenon is a lime between managers, which invariably will have a cross-section of races and

subcultures, and will indirectly yield some future deal or new business idea or information sharing/ gathering on the state of economy. This outcome reinforces trust and respect as being necessary preconditions for information sharing (Droege et al., 2003; Sporleder and Moss, 2002).

Second, given the versatility implicit to the liming concept, the within-class limes are the ones that occur in a multitude of settings. These range from individuals' homes to wherever the group gathers locally or internationally and so can move with a certain measure of fluidity across locales without needing the definition of a formalized location. As there is shared mutual trust and common beliefs between persons, the location and outcomes remain fluid, reinforcing the core of the lime, where the lime evolves of its own volition, transcending space and the western puritan notion of the use of time. Therefore for persons belonging to the same social class, the lime serves as a strong socio-psychological reinforcement of relationships (Hill, 1990; Smith and Lohrke, 2008).

Third, the lime that occurs between managers and employees is one that can be seen as yielding camaraderie between co-workers and re-enforcing company spirit. Even within this context any opportunistic behaviour or social climbing is frowned upon as that very action will endanger the natural evolution of a good lime; within the context of liming the evolution of the lime takes precedence over any disruptive opportunistic behaviour. Managers, however, can utilize a good company lime as an occasion to mobilize resources in a manner that trades on the goodwill generated by the lime's resultant camaraderie. This type of lime is one that continues to be formalized and increasingly falls into the category of planned events, typically organized on public holidays or as family days.

Fourth, the employee lime, which will have a cross-section of classes, races and subcultures, can generate camaraderie between the co-workers. Given the diversity in the workplace, employees will represent a cross-section of society who collectively will need to find a place to 'lime' and de-stress from the workplace. This type of liming can be seen as a potential explanation for the formalization of liming in selected locations like that of Oistins, Gros Islet and Gouyave. Unlike the lime that occurs within a particular class, the fluidity of location becomes limited due to the very intricate class structures that exist in the West Indies, therefore this type of lime is in need of a neutral location that can transcend the class lines. The services offered by these newer liming locations, food, drinks, and music, allow the limers to bring only the ingredients of the humorous conversation in order to have a good lime.

Fifth, the lime that occurs between the electorate and the politician has the potential to yield either positive results, in the form of representation (winning the constituency) and camaraderie, or negative results in the form of a loss. The huge disparity in the outcomes associated with this type of liming highlights the exacting punishment that can be willed unto a candidate perceived to be liming only for the sake of being elected. This type of lime still occurs for the most part in the traditional liming haunts of the rum shop and community centre, close to the predominantly rural electoral base. And in these places the traditional modes of liming still reverberate as strongly as in the newly developed modes in the formalized locations. As we have shown, the lime can happen anywhere and at anytime, can be indulged in by all regardless of social class and can also both transcend and reinforce social class divisions without any obvious tangible gain to any political party.

In the cultural context of the English-speaking Caribbean the lime leads to the creation of strong community norms and the evidence presented here supports the idea that this is also used by community leaders to build support. As the lime becomes increasingly formalized, in terms of place and organization, there is an increased likelihood that social relations will develop with less reliance on informality and begin to rely more on weak links which can be arbitraged for future gain. As this happens and the community builds new networks, trust, information and communication exchange,

then social cohesion, political empowerment and collective action as part of social capital should follow. Further research over time can assess how the theory of bonding and bridging social capital operates in this cultural context.

Building on the cultural metaphor

Finally, to conclude our discussion we present an example of the formal use of the metaphor in the word lime as the brand name of the telecommunications company, LIME (landlines, internet, mobile and entertainment) (LIME, 2010). Conversation is an integral part of the lime in the West Indies and so the predominant supplier of telecommunications, currently facing intense competition, is now trading on the notion of liming on the telephone and other media. According to the logic of liming, one concern expressed is, will the connotations of liming – and by extension 'liming on the phone' and 'liming on the internet' – produce a negative image of LIME as employees spend more time engaged in non-work conversations.

The use of (lime) to rebrand a business under attack is interesting, as it clearly establishes the company as part of the Caribbean and part of the common community culture. The association with chilling out or liming carries the positive image that the products, telephony and internet, are part of the social identity of the region and integral to the relationships that people maintain. The interviews we reported on earlier in the paper demonstrate that people who are liming are using tele-communication tools to foster connections social, business and political. LIME is thus an integral part of the activities building social relations and leading to social capital development. We would argue that this is the connection that LIME is trying to make in consumers' minds as they make the purchasing decision.

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