

## Beyond Cookie Cutter Templates to Women's Lived Experiences: Domestic Violence-based Refugee Claims from Guyana

We will use institutional ethnography as an analytical framework concerning an access to justice to explore how the Refugee Protection Division adjudicators at the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB) in Canada determine the existence of adequate state protection for claimants from Guyana who cite domestic violence as the basis of their refugee protection claims. We will combine a case review of domestic violence-based refugee claims at the IRB with our original, empirical field research conducted through interviews with Guyanese judicial service-providers and pertaining to the country's domestic violence laws. We will then examine access to justice at two separate but connected points in the Americas: on the frontlines in Guyana and at the IRB in Canada. Our objective is to juxtapose primary narratives of those working in to provide protection to domestic violence victims in Guyana with ideological, institutionally-oriented accounts of the law.

Our primary research done with judicial service-providers working with survivors of domestic violence on the ground in Guyana indicate that there are significant issues with implementing the Domestic Violence Act and that any success in accessing state protection in Guyana seems to be highly varied and individualized. Despite this, in many cases, adjudicators at the IRB in Canada used "cookie cutter" analyses to determine whether state protection was available in Guyana without properly weighing the claimant's own evidence. IRB adjudicators focused disproportionately on the fact that the state of Guyana was making serious efforts to provide protection, while failing to examine the effects of those efforts.

This suggests that IRB adjudicators employed a different approach than prescribed by the law, regulations, and guidelines in selecting what was relevant to come to their own conclusions about available state protection.

