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Voices of the (In)Visible: A Gendered Study on Higglers In Downtown Kingston, Jamaica

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Abstract

This project examines the lived experiences of higglers in Downtown, Kingston, and how they survive Jamaica's misogynistic capitalist patriarchal society as marginalized Black working-class women. Data were gathered through a series of semi-structured and unstructured interviews, and participant observation and journal entries. My theoretical frame employed historical materialism and Black Feminist epistemological standpoints which include Caribbean, African and 'Third World' feminism, through a gendered lens to deconstruct neoliberal global capitalism in neocolonial Jamaica. My project also assumes that the impact of neoliberal global capitalism that thrives on patriarchy has forced Black working-class women in Jamaican to reproduce a political consciousness of survival in the informal economy. Understanding how the legacies of (British-American) capitalism, colonialism and imperialism provided the stimulus for Jamaica's peripheral position on the global landscape and the ways in which sexual and gendered politics negatively affect higglers, I primarily engage discourses of difference, power, privilege and resistance. Ultimately, I found that there is a growing anti-Black woman*hood* (neo)colonial gendered coded sentiment that has been culturally normalized in Jamaica.

Voices of the (In)Visible: A Gendered Study on Higglers In Downtown Kingston, Jamaica

by

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~ Blessings and Respect ~

To the Higglers Downtown, Kingston

And to the

Feminist Social Justice Scholar-activists and Activists

who still

struggle

for social transformation in Jamaica

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PEPSI

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INTRODUCTION

Site of Inquiry

The atmosphere is tainted with excitement. Reggae, dancehall and gospel music pulsating from sound systems. Patrons/higglers singing and even dancing along. Sweaty hand-cart men hasten through the crowd.[1] *Chorus of higglers, women, and men, clapping, singing catchy tunes and rhymes advertising their goods. Scores of people standing under "the Big Tree" listening to sermons and testimonies – "Repent! Repent! Repent!". Sidewalks and roadways jam-packed with people pushing and bumping against each other as they rush up and down the infamous King Street, Orange Street, West Street, Barry Street, Heywood Street, Princess Street and Beckford Street. Women getting their hair and nails done. "Mi chain! (My chain)" screams a woman as she holds her neck.*

Graffiti spray-painted on the concrete walls of the "government yard" – Tivioli. In and around Coronation "Curry" Market - flamboyant rows of fruits, vegetables and ground provisions guarded by women sitting in aprons. The smell of herbs and spices competes with the rancid smell of debris and gutter water. The atmosphere is buzzing with laughter and conversations. Men sitting around makeshift tables animatedly playing dominoes while they sip on a beer or a mixed concoction… one had a spliff/cigarette in his mouth. While another set worked intensely mending and repairing handcarts. Welcome to the heart of the market district on typical "market days" – Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays.

Victoria Pier, Grace Kennedy headquarters, The Craft Market and other buildings along Harbor Street, redesigned and restored. Lawyers, clothed in black jacket, tie, skirt, and pants

[1] Higglers are Black working-class women, or men (who represent the minority who engage in the trade), who buys sells, and markets their goods. This study focuses on women. There are mainly four types types of higglers' in Jamaica – market vendors, street vendors, craft trader and informal commercial importers (ICIs)- and all four were included in this study.

suits, walk along lower King Street and Duke street to their offices surrounding the Supreme Court building. Numerous dilapidated and abandoned buildings. Honda CRVs, BMWs, Toyota Corollas, parked in lots and along the street under the gaze of security guards. The traffic passes quietly along the Bank of Jamaica building on Nethersole Place and Ocean Boulevard. Jamaicans pensively sit by the Waterfront –Kingston's 'hip-strip'- listening to the sound of the waves, indulging in one of eight popular restaurant brands, like Gloria's or Devon House I Scream, or taking a trip to Maiden Cay on the Loose Cannon Tours. Welcome to downtown's business district.

(Journal Entry, September 9, 2019)

The Kingston Metropolitan Area (KMA) includes the parishes of Kingston and the urbanized section of St. Andrew. The KMA houses just under one-third of Jamaica's estimated 2.7 million residents with a larger portion of the population residing in St. Andrew.[2] Kingston has been Jamaica's capital since the late 1880s and was the country's commerce, trading and cultural center during the colonialism. Under the present neocolonial structure, the expansion of trade shifted to New Kingston, Constant Spring, Half-Way-Tree and Newport West in St. Andrew. What remained in Kingston are the markets, abandoned and dilapidated buildings, ghetto/garrison communities and informal (market district) and formal (business district) trading spaces.[3] This is Downtown, a central subject discussed in this project and my research site. The KMA is therefore a site in which wealth and power, poverty and exclusion are concentrated. A

[2] This figure is an approximate value that was obtained from the Statistical Institute of Jamaica and does not represent a census data. The last census count was done in 2011 and another is to be done in 2021 (taken approximately every 10 years).

[3] Ghetto communities developed from the slums in West Kingston and are characterized by gang violence, drugs and warfare. Garrison communities are state housing allocation based on political party favoritism and have features of ghetto politics. These communities were constructed by a combination of partisan political violence and gang rivalries. The labels are often used interchangeably, hence why I use the term ghetto/garrison, and the spaces are occupied by the poorest and most marginal working-class citizens.

place of stark gender inequality marked by distinct borders and boundaries among the upper, middle, and working-class residents and the spaces they occupy. When we speak of class in Jamaica, the capitalist class, owners of the means of production, is referred to as the upper-class "men" and "women" in society and the lower working-class, those who sell their labor, denotes the Black "men" and "women". Middle class is a fluidity identity that falls between the capitalist class and the working-class.

The spatial and ideological polarization are reproduced, maintained through social institutions and often represented by a contrast between "uptown" (St. Andrew) and "downtown" (Kingston). This dichotomy symbolizes the lived experiences, lifestyle and physical location of residents. I say this because there are ghetto/garrison communities in urbanized sections of St. Andrew as well. Seventy percent (70%) of the participants interviewed in this study are from ghetto/garrison communities in the KMA.[4] However, all participants occupy spaces Downtown through their trade – higglering.

Downtown, as shown in my journal entry above, can be viewed as a microcosm of the wider society as the space serves as a mixed environment for business/commercial, government/civic, residential/resort, cultural, recreational and entertainment purposes. It is an urbanized neocolonial gendered place that operates under a "see and blind" "informa fi dead (informer must die)" "shotta/badman/badgyal(badgirl)" culture which instills fear, promotes silence or forced adaptation and acceptance to this pathological naturalized behavior. The street

[4] A total of 25 higglers – twenty located the market district and five in the business district - were interviewed for this project.

culture of Downtown, are therefore filled with aggressive retaliation that evades the formal judicial systems and processes. As Imani Tafari-Ama so rightly states:

> …the law of the urban landscape is 'blood for blood' and 'fire for fire'. Hence, for poor city residents, violence is embedded in their past, pervades their present, and threatens to overrun their future
>
> *(Blood Bullets and Bodies, 2006:11)*

Silence and exclusion thus become articulations of "Othering" and forms of invisibility on which the street as an institution, unfortunately flourishes. Downtown, a place that, cultivates and proliferate crime and violence demands the state's agents, the capitalist class and transnational corporations to take control of the 'problem'. "When traditional institutions or values [do] not fit, they are considered 'dysfunctional' to the process of development and regarded as 'problems', which comprehensive socio-economic planning could be designed to correct" (Hoogvelt, 2001:36). The 'problem', to give it a name – politics of masculinity, politics of identity, politics of respectability, political partisan politics, politics of 'difference'- as the Jamaican saying goes 'bruk (break) out like sore', has escalated beyond the state's control. These growing forms of 'local' cultural imperialism, the problem, are not conducive to capitalism's vision of expanding of the modernization project.[5] Since, capitalism is hegemonic and normative and the Jamaican state continuesto put capital (power) before its people, "progress became a matter of ordered social reform" (Hoogvelt, 2001:36). Thus, the state implemented Zones of Special Operations (ZOSO), a tool of political, social, economic and epistemic violence, facilitate the warfare between the state and gang members from ghetto/garrison communities as a way of exerting power, discipline, and control.[6]

[5] See Stone, C., 1940-1993. (1980). Democracy and Clientelism in Jamaica. New Brunswick, N.J: Transaction Books.
[6] ZOSO is a tool implemented by the Jamaican government in response to the alarming increase in murders in 2017. This joint military effort between the government, Jamaica Defense Force (soldiers) and the Jamaica Constabulary Force (police) was

Jamaica's neoliberal capitalist project made the economy a hostile place for skilled middle-class professionals, skilled technical members of the working-class and even more aggressive for the unskilled working-class. Moreover, the economy is riddled with crime and violence as shown in Table 1 below.[7] These effects led to an increase in emigration of the skilled working-class and middle-class to approximately 15, 905 in 2018 from 12, 055 in 2014.[8] Crime and violence historically has its roots in political gang violence, with blood feuds fostering persistent grudges and personal vendettas among gang members in garrison communities (Stone, 1980; Levy, 1996) . This is compounded by feminization of labor, socio-political and economic hopelessness and high unemployment among Black working-class residents living at the "wrong address". According to Levy (1996:24):

> Residents of the areas researched universally speak of this stigma, often with bitterness over its gross unfairness. They report that employers refuse to consider applicants, even those with adequate education or who have passed job requirement tests, once they hear their address. Some employers do not hesitate to say why they reject an application: you come from a bad area where only robbers and gunmen and their families live

Number of Serious and Violent Crimes Committed in Jamaica from 2011 - 2015

Serious & Violent Crimes	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Grand Total
Murder	1133	1099	1201	1005	1207	**5645**
Shooting	1354	1247	1245	1102	1070	**6018**
Rape	857	959	855	714	599	**3984**
Aggravated Assault	333	934	810	694	599	**3370**
Grand Total	**3677**	**4239**	**4111**	**3515**	**3476**	**19017**

are assigned to operate within a zone not only to control but to ensure the erasure of the politically normalized gang culture in garrison/ghetto communities such as Denham Town, Trench Town, Whitfield Town, Tivoli Gardens, Grant's Pen in the KMA.

[7] This table does not include the number of violent crimes and so called crimes that have not been reported.

[8] Figures provided by the Statistical institute of Jamaica and are subjected to change.
https://statinja.gov.jm/Demo_SocialStats/newbirthdeathmarriage.aspx

Source provided by the Bureau of Gendered Affairs (BGA)
Table 1

Downtown. An institutionalized site for material prosperity. An institutionalized site of hardship. An institutionalized site of (em)bodied violence. An institutionalized site of gender power. An institutional site of hegemonic masculinity entrenched in badmanism and toughness. An institutionalized ghetto/garrison or what Imani Tafari-Ama describes as a 'ghetto trap'.[9] Given its clientelist and "Badman" sociopolitical history since the 1970s, this site is most suitable for a gendered analysis, examination of Black working-class women's material conditions and the embodied heteropatriarchal consciousness that is adopted by most citizen.[10] Thus, by contextualizing higglers' lived experiences of the gendered power structure in Downtown you will understand the challenges of higglers realities and how Downtown's political economy functions as a tool for oppression. This case study will discuss the material conditions of higglers in the streets of downtown and how they learn how to survive this gendered space as marginalized Black bodies within an oppressive capitalist space.

Statement of the Problem and Rationale

Capitalism is systematized, transnational, cultural and monopolistic. Slavery. Colonialism. Imperialism. Neocolonialism. Neoliberalism. Its mode of production has morphed into different forms that use many devious ways and means to destroy humanness. Capitalism is

9 Coined by Imani Tafari-Ama in *Blood Bullets and Bodies*, the ghetto trap is a cyclical and inescapable economic/social trap (of poverty, violence, and crime) that marginalizes residents of ghetto/garrison communities.
10 Heteropatriarchal consciousness is a social order that legitimizes the power and control of middle-class men within the state, and their manly and heterosexual beliefs over the nation.

an "engine of production" that promotes privatized capital accumulation and is regulated by laws of conflict and competition and leads to unequal development and injustice (Jaleé, 1977). Capitalism, currently parades as neoliberal globalization, persists to seduce, captivate, oppress and isolate colonial sites for its self-interest. Because capitalism grew out of global struggles of resistance, “equality and freedom are…envisioned by those punished by and excluded from Western notions of freedom [” (Eisenstein, 2004:2).

The word “higger” derives from the English word “higgle” which means to sell or peddle. For this thesis, I use “higgler” specifically to denote a Black working-class woman who buys, sells and markets agricultural, manufactured or crafted goods, or cooked foods in the streets or a designated government market space as a hustle (an illegal practice) or a profession for survival or goal attainment. [11] Higglering and its racialized gendered and class ideologies helped to shape the organization of labor in the slave plantation system and has since been linked to Black working-class Jamaican women's material conditions. [12] These ideologies are reproduced in public/private spaces, especially in informal spaces like the streets in downtown.[13] Therefore, working outside the home has always been a natural part of Black women’s identity and a vital contribution to their society’s social, cultural, and economic development. Yet, higglers role in development, especially economic development, is not recognized and they are exposed to extreme exploitation and oppression because labor laws do not accommodate them.

[11] Data from interviews showed that higglering was seen as a hustle by young women in the trade primarily as a means to finance their education and by older women "to get back on their feet" or a "stepping stone”. As a profession, which most of my older participants identified the trade, higglering was viewed as a business venture that they will do until they die because they love to sell.

[12] The informal economy extends beyond the International Labor Organization definition of the employment arrangements and dynamic labor practices in the labor market https://www.ilo.org/ilostat-files/Documents/description_IFL_EN.pdf. But also considers how gender informs those arrangements and practices.

[13] Here, I present the street as a public/private domain because the street is a place where many higglers sleep and work.

Neoliberal development programs and their conditionalities amplified Black working-class women's social and economic inequalities and is the main reason for the continued increase in the number of women entering the informal economy to make a living, through trades like higglering. Every citizen recognizes that "the problem" of higgerling poses a threat to so called development but few acknowledge that its adverse effects are structural and its impact on the Black working-class, especially women and their material conditions.[14] As a result, higglers', Downtown reproduce a political consciousness of survival, where negotiation of their rights to space and place are occasionally enacted in the only form they can be heard – a protest. Hence, why Tallis explains:

> *Do you think they want us to sell over there (points to Redemption Arcade). They just want us to get fed up. Why do you think they are taking so long to fix it up? That is why we have to get mad...they (the state) treat the Chinese people better than us… it's because we are Black…that's why many times, we run from the lane to KSAC and get mad and block the road. Then you hear that we are ghetto people and we lack knowledge. But I am no fool.*
>
> (Interview with author, July 3, 2019)

Higglers call for equality and freedom from the oppression they face from colorism, classism and sexism, is expressed by getting 'mad' and 'blocking roads' because they are 'fed up' of these systems that portrays them as "fool(s)". Their actions are then often misread by the nation, as they are presented by the media, agents of the state, as homogenously lawless, "vulgar, unfeminine, and contaminating", in order to validate the way, the state disciplines them (Brown-Glaude, 2011). Since many higglers' are heads of their households and from ghetto traps,

[14] There has been a history of conflict among higglers, wholesalers/retailers, the state and customers. The Kingston and St. Andrew Municipal Corporation (KSAMC) wants orderly vending in prescribed areas; wholesalers/retailers want higglers removed from their business entrance; vendors in prescribed location say they are losing their sale to street-side higglers; street-side higglers say that this is the only way they can make a living; and pedestrians/customers have no place to walk but on the road, alongside vehicular traffic. The perceived "problem" is surface level and is only a part of the problem.

discipline can be viewed as an attempt to recolonize the Black working-class. Similar to Tallis, Country-girl further explains:

> *This is West Kingston, so they (the state's agents and the middle class) have it to say that because this is an inner-city area, everybody is alike…the environment is very rough…a ghetto dis (this) but you kyah (cannot) treat everybody with a ghetto mentality*
>
> (Interview with author, June 25, 2019)

Ghetto mentality in this regard, ties into Western discourses of backwardness and violence and suggests that Black citizens from ghetto traps like West Kingston, are generally illiterate, uneducated and violent. These ideological representations, along with their living and working conditions, the police, the "see, blind, hear and deaf" culture, thieves and the Kingston and St. Andrew Municipal Corporation (KSAMC) are structural threats to their livelihood.[15] Thus, higglers self-defined perspective are guided by their social realities and higglering is a form politicized survival strategy and a socioeconomic way of life against the grain of gendered systems of power. The oppressive systems of capitalism and hetero-patriarchy in Jamaica, I argue, are culturally, politically, economically and legislatively reproduced in the social realities of higglers' everyday life. I will, therefore, center gender specifically at the intersections of race/color, sex, sexuality and class to capture the neoliberal configurations of power, privilege and oppression.[16]

Conclusively, my objective is to explore the strength and resilience of higglers and how they are surviving the adverse impact of capitalism and patriarchal oppression in the informal

[15] Kingston and St. Andrew Municipal Corporation (KSAMC) previously Kingston and St. Andrew Corporation (KSAC), main function is to monitor and regulate orderly development in Kingston.

[16] This study uses color to convey that whiteness is still used as a yardstick for respectability, desirability and social mobility in Jamaica, similar to how race is organized in the United States.

economy. My central argument is that the impact of neoliberal capitalism and patriarchy has forced Black working-class Jamaican women to reproduce a political consciousness of survival in the informal economy. To analyze and critique this statement, my primary research question asks: how does the capitalist state persistently disenfranchise Jamaican higglers? In attempting to answer this, my project examines, how the informal economy serves heteropatriarchal interests. Therefore, I will be taking a materialist feminist approach to consider capitalism and patriarchy, as fundamental systems, in understanding the reproduction of gender politics and what Mrinalini Sinha calls "gendered modes of national belonging" (McCann and Kim, 2017:263), since gender differences have been pivotal to the construction of the Jamaican economy.

Theoretical and Methodological Framework

Theoretical Approach

…the mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general; that all the social and political relations, all religious and legal systems, all the theoretical outlooks which emerge in history, are to be comprehended only when the material conditions of life of the respectively corresponding epochs are understood and the former are derived from these material conditions. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness

(Frederick Engels, Karl Marx, A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy)[17]

The theoretical framework that will be used to analyze my thesis is historical materialism. Historical Materialism will contextualize the embedded structural gender inequalities and social injustice in Jamaica as a result of its colonial history. The theory above as postulated by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels argues that the material conditions, social realities, of human beings

[17] Marx, K., & Engels, F., (1950). Karl Marx and Frederick Engels: Selected Works. Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, pp. 334

determines their consciousness since social existence is a product of her/his consciousness. Societal policies, laws and social institutions influence how working-class citizens behave. Consequentially, social institutions enable a majority of higglers to operate illegally and the poor to turn to *crime* and violence to "eat a food".[18] Therefore, the problem identified could not be taken out of its historical and materialist context.

Marx and Engels asserted that throughout history human beings were able to alter their material conditions by creating new modes of production for surplus accumulation given the conditions surrounding social production and reproduction. While Marx and Engles (1950) presented historical materialism as a theory for explaining how capitalism shapes class conflict and class struggles based on historical development, feminist scholars like Zillah Eisenstein (1999) and Heidi Hartmann (McCann and Kim, 2017) believe that capitalism and patriarchy are interdependent systems of oppression and by accepting their dialectical relationship, we will understand development in capitalist societies and women's struggles in them. My understanding of how the materialist conception of development and its associated economic base (human social relations) links with the superstructures in society (the state and social institutions) allowed me to comprehend how the hegemonic systems of oppression (capitalism and patriarchy) act as constraints to equitable development.

As a Black Jamaican woman sharing the experiences of Black women from Jamaica, I will "marry" specifically a Black feminist standpoint with the historical and materialist theory in this study. A Black feminist historical materialist standpoint will examine Black women's material realities and patriarchal institutions from an epistemological level, as well as

[18] "eat a food" – a Jamaican slang which means to make money.

demonstrate how both theory and praxis can be redirected to a more emancipatory direction towards social justice. More importantly, the production of a Black feminist thought as Collins (2000) asserts, does not rely exclusively on materialist analysis where Black women "by virtue of biology become automatically registered as "authentic Black feminists" – nor on an idealist analysis whereby the background, worldview, and interests of the thinker are deemed irrelevant in assessing his or her ideas. It "involves reassessing the centrality Black women intellectuals assume in producing Black feminist thought... It also requires, examining the importance of coalitions with Black men, white women, people of color, and other groups' contributions as critics, teachers, advocates, and disseminators of a self-defined Afrocentric feminist standpoint" (394). I will, therefore, incorporate 'Third World' (Women of Color) feminist thoughts as part of my analysis.

As a Black feminist thinker, I believe incorporating this self-defined standpoint as praxis is crucial for analysis, knowledge production, theorization, and pedagogy because self-definition relinquishes power from the oppressor and empowers the oppressed. It is equally important that I commit to interrogating race (color), class, gender and other differences within Black women's identities, and to contest existing ways of examining structures of inequality, given Black women's history of disenfranchisement and erasure. As a 'privileged' Black intellectual, I situate my theoretical and methodological framework within the work of decolonizing colonial epistemology, self-definition and social justice. This structure unravels an almost invisible difference between Western thoughts that silence and the anti-oppressive and anti-exploitative collectives/movements/groups that liberates by inviting those on the margins to speak.

Caribbean feminist genealogies originated from the patronage of the University of the West Indies (UWI) and aimed to define, establish, and defend a state of equal political, economic, cultural, and social rights for women in the Caribbean entrenched in colonialism (Momsen, 1993:3). Thus, the goal of the Caribbean feminist project according to Patricia Mohammed "has been shaped by the varied expressions of twentieth-century feminism is to unearth the complexity of social and biological gender" brought on by the region's colonial past.[19] Neoliberalism institutionalized radical feminism in Jamaica and confined it to the academy, therefore, there has not been any radical moments since the People's National Party Women's Movement (PNPWM), the Sistren Women's Theatre Collective and the Committee of Women's for Progress (CWP) in the 1970s. Hence, I will, incorporate Caribbean feminist scholars, as a basis for understanding Jamaica's systemic inequality through a gendered Pan-African gaze. Additionally, I will integrate Black and Women of Color feminist thoughts to articulate what Patricia Hill Collins refers to as a transformative "humanist vision of community" (Collins, 2000). that marginalized communities could embrace. By centering the voices of higglers in this thesis, as praxis, I will reveal their truths that bring visibility to their material conditions and my contribution to feminist scholarship.

A Pan-African ideology purports that Africans and people of African descent share a common past and destiny and encourages transnational solidarity for *all* people who identify as such. Its movement also challenges, capitalist socio-political constructs and stimulates activism that is organized in Black communities globally, for equality, self-development, emancipation and freedom from oppressive forces. Pan-Africanism, however, struggled to address gendered oppression because much of their heteronormative ideologies exclude, silences and treat Black

[19] Mohammed, P., (2002). The Material of Gender.

women as appendages. Furthermore, Pan-Africanism's patriarchal gaze should shift beyond a history of sexist and misogynistic masculine sentiments to "show the world, and especially [Black] women… that patriarchal, phallocentric, militaristic and misogynistic masculinity are not definitive practices or modes of masculinity but deformations and destructions of masculinity" (Rabaka, 2009:77).

As Cheryle Clarke (1983) so rightfully expressed in *Home Girls*:

> …it is ironic that the Black Power movement could transform the consciousness of an entire generation of [B]lack people regarding self-determination and, at the same time, fail so miserably in understanding the sexual politics of the movement and of [B]lack people across the board (199).

In response to their experience and disillusionment within the Black liberation movement the Combahee River Collective asserts:

> There is also undeniably a personal genesis for Black feminism, that is, the political realization that comes from the seemingly personal experiences of individual [B]lack women's lives.
>
> *(The Combahee River Collective, Black Feminist Statement)*

Black feminism is about "consciousness-raising", coalition building and "unlike any other movement, black feminism provides the theory that clarifies the nature of Black women's experience, … and encourages political action that will change the very system that put us down" (Smith, 1995:262). To reverberate to voices and profoundly analytical feminist theorization of Cheryl Clarke, Angela Davis, Barbara Smith, Audrey Lorde, Patricia Hill Collins, bell hooks, Francis Beale, Linda La Rue, Deborah King, June Jordan, Johnnetta Betch-Cole, Beverly Guy-

Sheftall, Linda Carty, among others; Black feminism liberates; it is radical; it decenters; it historicizes; it is powerful.

By centralizing Black feminist thought as the core ideology for analyzing higglers' oppressive relationship (and indirectly other groups of women and bodies who feel distant from feminist discourse and praxis) to capitalism and patriarchal hegemonic political systems. I hope that this study will bring awareness to factors that alienate and exploit Black women's material reality and provides an understanding of why higglers reject state laws. In other words, as a Black feminist thinker, and woman of African descent, from the Caribbean, my analysis will closely examine the gender power and class perspective as a way of formulating my gendered Pan-African approach.

Methodological Approach

My methodological frame was influenced by the theoretical ideologies, on decolonizing discourse, self-determination and social justice. My use of feminist ethnographic qualitative research method was a personal decision to decolonize colonial epistemology (knowing) on Black women's ontology (about reality). In other words, my use of refusal as a methodological practice was more than just a "no" but a type of investigation into "what you need to know and what I refuse to write in" (Simpson, *On ethnographic refusal*, 2007:72, qtd. in Tuck & Yang, 2014:23). Therefore, on an epistemological level, I engaged in refusal, as a way of thinking, about humanizing my research process, contrary to the traditional value-free, "damaged-based", exclusionary, unethical Western research practice the academy reproduces as "truth" and "facts" and how these are situated. This is perpetuated within the academy, gatekeepers of neocolonialism, through prescriptive systems and Committees/Boards that "approves" and

control the type of knowledge that the world gets exposed to. To this end, the researched becomes objectified, objects of knowledge to be controlled within the research, as the researcher speaks for them.

Donna Haraway (1988) 'situated knowledge' provided a "vision" for my feminist ethics and politics and how to act in accordance with them as "a *possible* allegory for feminist version of objectivity" (p.583). She explains that going beyond the "bias in science" situated knowledge, a metaphor of "vision" works like a tool, in contrary to "the god trick" - "a conquering gaze" (p.581), that embraces which bodies matter. This vision according to Haraway, embodied partial and accountable practices that influenced how I organized the research process. With this in mind I went to Jamaica with the practice of seeing social and physical differences as a way of embodying feminist objectivity (Haraway, 1988: 583).

While in Jamaica, for two months (between June 2019 and August 2019), I conducted field research using stratified random sampling. Field observations were done at various hours of the day, between 7 am and 7 pm, for four hours, five to six days per week. The methods employed in the field were observation, semi-structured and unstructured interviews. I engaged in conversations with twenty-five higglers, each lasting approximately 20 to 60 minutes. Interviews were done on days where there were fewer business activities – Mondays to Wednesdays. By incorporating my "visualizing practices", I became aware of the physical and psychosocial environment and personal space in which higglers occupy from a gendered gaze. Their lived experiences and how capitalism and remnants of slavery and colonialism impact their reality also became more apparent.

The majority of my representational sample was selected from the *vending* and no *vending zones* in the market district and the minority, from the *vending* and *no vending zone* in the business district. I found this contradicting as vending is prohibited to the ordinary higgler, yet Lee (a participant), had the right to sell in the no vending zone. As she explained "This (her cart) is a franchise of Grace so I am more privileged than others" (July 8, 2019). As a Jamaican, my familiarity with downtown made me aware that the majority of the vendors were located in the market district because of the centrality of the location and historical significance of the location.

However, as I navigated the field, I found that the dynamics of the environment changed how I envisioned the location for the interviews. The higglers refused to review written consent forms and twenty-four of twenty-five interviews were unscheduled because of their daily private and public demands. For this reason, interviews were done on spot, shortly after I introduced myself. Before the beginning of each interview participant and I engaged in a brief conversation about issues surrounding my study and discussing the information provided on the oral consent form in my native tongue. Most higglers also refused to accept a copy of the oral consent form, as it would not "benefit" them, and all, except for one higgler, allowed me to audio-record them. In the case where the interview was not audio recorded the conversation was written verbatim. The higgler was asked to speak slowly so that I could accurately record the conversation in my field notes. The process was lengthy and tedious because I had to recruit, obtain consent and interview participants while they periodically conducted business in a busy environment.

Situated knowledge thus required a practice of positioning and self-reflexivity, that carefully analyzes the power relations at work. During the first three weeks of my field

investigation I primarily engaged in participant observation and reviewed documents at various libraries; namely, the University of the West Indies Mona, the Bureau of Gendered Affairs (BGA), Urban Development Corporation and the National Library of Jamaica. While at the BGA, I had short but meaningful conversations with a Policy Analyst, a Research Officer from the *Male's Desk* and the Acting Rural Sociologist from the Community Liaison Unit. I also had the privilege of talking to a Police Constable stationed at the Darling Street police station and a receptionist/clerk (who seemed frustrated with the oppressive working conditions at KSAC given the insights, she provided) while in the making observation notes on the operations of the streets. Observations on the attitude and behavior of male higglers led me to converse with seven male higglers. I made notes, written and tape-recorded, immediately after and while these conversations were taking place. While the study's primary focus is on women in higglering, the views of male higglers and the others will be incorporated in this project as they highlighted the different ways in which men's experiences and expectations diverged in relation to women.

I learned that stereotyping higglers' make them extremely visible, as "the problem" from the garrison/ghetto, and invisible, as Black working-class women from the garrison/ghetto. As the representative other, issues of boundaries and border crossing (geographical, cultural, physical and academic) became concerns while in the field. Thus, in an effort to humanize and radicalize aspects of my methodology, ethical protocols and respect were paramount throughout the recruitment and interview processes. I not only represented otherness in the field, but I also had the privilege and power as a researcher to represent others like and unlike myself. As an "outsider within" I realized that my middle-class status at times made me feel out-of-place at different points in my field investigation. My nationality as a Black Jamaican woman from humble beginnings, led me to think that I belonged to the working-class segment of the society

and that this similarity would make it easier for me to relate with these women, since I had my own stories of pain and disenfranchisement while working at the University of the West Indies (UWI), a patriarchal institution (Carty, 1988) that operates similar to a Best (1978) plantation economy model.[20] However, our difference became apparent and I had to consciously make an effort to remove my "academic armors".

According to Kari Lerum (2001), the academic armors are the physical and psychological means through which professional academics protect their known position as experts in their field. While observing higglers' downtown, I realized that my encounter with them made self-reflexivity and representation problematic. In other words, my nationality as a Jamaican and familiarity with the culture was not enough, because geographical, social and political borders did not make me knowledgeable of the ins and outs of the informal sector. As such, by shedding my academic armors – linguistic armor (creates language barrier); physical armor (professional attire); ideological armor (creates sociopolitical boundaries) - speaking in Jamaican patios, wearing my 'yard clothes' and acknowledging my participants emotions while conducting interviews made most of my participant and myself more comfortable. Hence, when I asked questions (and in some cases the women openly shared information) about their intimate and domestic affairs, Coolz did not hesitate to tell me she was a victim of domestic abuse; Joy Full willingly told about how she contracted an STD and Julia proudly explained her relations with

[20] I presented UWI as a neocolonial plantation structure because education represents what sugar signified over a century ago - a cash crop, controlled by expatriates for the maintenance of global capitalism. UWI, as a patriarchal and neoliberal academy, creates epistemic borders, which further widens social and economic class boundaries, among citizens inside and outside the institution. This is partially due to the conditionalities of Jamaica's neoliberal development project which structurally positions UWI, as a satellite, that align with the global North expansionism and globalization's capitalist agenda. (See: https://www.uwi.edu/about.asp).

multiple sexual partners. These methodological feminist praxes heightened my awareness of the implications of inequalities and difference.

Chapter Organization

Chapter one, *Historicizing Black Working-Class Women's Gendered Reality* focuses on how the classed social politics of capitalist patriarchy affected Black working-class women's material condition in Jamaica. I employ 'difference' as a tool of analysis to highlight the experiences of Black working-class women's gendered reality. This chapter contextualizes my analyses for subsequent chapters. Chapter two, *Of Reputation and Respectability: An Exploration of Higglers Subjectivity Downtown* explores the exclusionary and oppressive practices that support the seeming homogeneity (from an outsider's gaze) and 'difference' (from and insiders gaze) which originated from, and dependent on, higglers' marginalized and socio-political locations within Downtown's political economy. In doing so, I centered the voices of the higglers I interviewed and examined their subjectivity through a gendered lens.

In this vein, Chapter three, *Imagined Reality: Faith, Sex and Hope for Sale*, I discuss the implications of how gender, class and sexuality serve to compound Jamaica's hetero-patriarchal masculinist agenda and how it disproportionately affects higglers. My *Conclusion* highlights and deconstructs the implications of the masculinist paradigm that Jamaica has inherited from its colonizer. I also reflect on how these ideations have failed to address the Black women subjectivity in Jamaica.

CHAPTER ONE

Historicizing Black Working-Class Women's Gendered Reality

Introduction

> Toughness is a defining characteristic that Black females embody, celebrate, manipulate, mediate, and (re)appropriate, as survival depends on performing some version of it. It is yet another false binary that upholds the gendered polemic. Indeed, "woman" is not to "lady" as "toughness" is to "weakness" any more than "uptown" is to "downtown" as "civilized" is to "vulgar." Yet such demarcations persist, as they serve purposes of control, difference, and domination.
> -Gina Athena Ulysse ,188

> We assert the equal importance of improving the status of Black, and we believe that without attention to gender matters, there can be no long-lasting solutions to many of our race problems.
> -Betsch Cole and Guy Sheftall, xxvii-xxviii

> The concept of the simultaneity of oppression is still the crux of a Black feminist understanding of political reality and, I believe, one of the most significant ideological contributions of Black feminist thought.
> - Barbara Smith, xxxii

Despite the advent of the island's independence in 1962, Jamaica, like other 'marketplaces' of the global South, continues to be politicized subjects of the United States and its imperialist alliance. The paradox of 'privilege' and 'development' is laden with conflicts and contradictions that emanated from Euro-centric and American-centric discourse of power; specific to the Caribbean region's history – conquest, genocide, the enslavement of Indigenous peoples and Africans, bonded immigrant labor: Chinese and East Indians and neocolonialism. In discussing the region's historical economic subjugation, Deere et.al (1990) states that racialized systems resonate with the ideological and cultural hegemonic order of wealth accumulation and ownership being associated with "whiteness and maleness" and "poverty and hard labor" with Black bodies, women, or other non-white racial groups (8). Rosina Wiltshire-Brodber also

warns, that the historical processes of slavery transferred the dominant systems of color and class in Caribbean societies, thereby making the issue of gender peripheral (Mohammed and Shepherd, 1988). The impact of Black women's (neo)colonial experience in Jamaica, thus, speaks to questions of color, class and gender, coded into questions of identity, belonging and relations; all of which determine how Black women's sexuality, labor power, gender power relations and cultural practices are organized. According to June Jordan:

> race and class and gender remain as real as the weather…and, like the weather, not predictable. And when these factors of race and class and gender collapse are whenever you try to use them as automatic concepts of connection. They may serve well as indicators of commonly felt conflicts, but as elements of connection they seem about as reliable as precipitation probability for the day after the night before the day.
>
> (Report from the Bahamas, 1985)

Thus, within its racist history, mutually constructed hierarchies of power, like color, class, and gender, comes into existence in and through complex connections with each other, to create the oppressive and exploitative political economy in Jamaica. This sort of socioeconomic marginalization of Black, brown and other people of color are anchored in the pathologization of Black people. However, it is necessary to point out that although 90 percent of Jamaica's population is Black, class system still privileges brown bodies and other people of color because their skin color, although to a lesser extent, still represents measurability for whiteness. Color, class, and gender locate higglers' in a conceptual frame of 'difference' that can be understood as embodied through multiple dimensions of social organization where concentrated power and capital constitute the institutionalized rejection of 'difference', that is necessary for capitalism. Consequently, as a result of human differences, the nation is organized to either fear, hate or

ignore difference that are subordinate or reproduce difference that dominant (Lorde, 1995). Difference, therefore, is an important mechanism to normalize and widen inequalities that support and maintain the upward distribution of resources that comes with power, privilege and capital accumulation.

To fully theorize higglers' political reality as marginal bodies in Jamaica, I offer Raewyn Connell, Monique Wittig, and Rhoda Reddock's theorization on gender, class and race/color respectively. Connell argues that:

> Gender is a way in which social practice is ordered…Gender exists precisely to the extent that biology does *not* determine social…it responds to particular situations and is generated within definite structures of social relations…[and] does not consist of isolated acts…[Gender is configured in] institutions such as the state, the workplace and the school [and] practices are structures concerning the reproductive arena…[A] three-fold model of the structure of gender [are:]
> (a) *Power relations*. The main axis of power…is the overall subordination of women and dominance of men - the structure of 'patriarchy' defines the problem of legitimacy, which has great importance for the politics of masculinity.
> (b) *Production relations*. Gender divisions of labor are familiar in the form of allocation of tasks… This is often discussed in terms of unequal wage rates, but the gendered character of capital favors men and not women controlling the major corporations and the great private fortunes.
> (c) *Cathexis*... Sexual desire is so often seen as natural and is commonly excluded…Yet these practices shape and normalize the desire of men as part of the gender order.
>
> (*The Social Organization of Masculinity, 2005)*

Regarding class, Wittig asserts:

> To define what we call oppression in materialist terms is to make it evident that women are a class, which is to say that category "woman", as well as the category "man", are political and economic categories. Once the class of "men" disappears, "women" as a class will disappear as well… [because] "women" is the product of a social relationship…because Marxism does not take into account the fact that class also consists of individuals…Class consciousness is not enough. We must first try to understand philosophically (politically) the concept of "subject" and "class consciousness" and how they work in relation to our history.
>
> (One Is Not Born Woman, 1981)

For race/color, Reddock explains:

> issues of 'race' and color have been central to Caribbean history and social and economic stratification, these issues have not emerged in the same way in all places and at all times across the region. Differences in regimes of race and color emerged based on the racial ideologies and practices of the main colonizer…the patterns of economic production, the extent of importation of other migrant laboring populations and other patterns of migration. Common to all of these racialized systems, however, was the privileged position of 'whiteness' and the negative racialization of dark skin colors… White privilege is maintained (although significantly reduced) through the practice of color privilege and the continued presence of Euro-American national, regional and transnational corporate interests and global communications. White privilege acts as a backdrop against which struggles of subordinate groups take place.
>
> (Diversity, Difference, and Caribbean Feminism: The Challenge of Anti-Racism, 2007)

As a result of these structural social categories of 'difference', higglers' are perceived and treated as gendered, racialized and political subjects of subordination because these hierarchies are implicated within and articulated ideological codes of power. This chapter will therefore provide context for constructs of color, class and gender in relation to capitalism and patriarchy and their effects on the lived experience of higglers in Jamaica. In doing so, I will appropriately locate higglers' material condition as systemic gendered oppression.

Historical Materialist Overview

The 'problem' of higglering has its roots in imperial and colonial attempts to eliminate higglers from economic spaces that were not intended for them (Brown-Glaude, 2011). The relationship between the expansion of trade, knowledge and empire building is restructured in the discourse of globalization as the relationship between the expansion of technology/information, economic opportunities and expansion of 'the market' for *trading the*

Other (Linda Tuhiwai Smith, 1999).[21] Since the 20th century, this new imperialist language was created within the wider discourses of racism, sexism, classism to locate the "Other" in a society. The idea of trading the Other stems from racist European and North American Enlightenment philosophers, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Count Arthur de Gobineau and Thomas Jefferson, who tied discourses of primitiveness and underdevelopment to Africans and people of African descent in order to position the West and whiteness as "civilized, advanced and superior" (Wright, 2004). Thus, framing higglers' as "the problem", classing, positioning and describing them as "lawless", "vulgar" and "criminals" in the media, as I previously established, are state-driven articulations to obscuring higglers' visibility because of their "threat" to mainstream development and social order based on Western standards.[22]

Winnifred Brown-Glaude eloquently situates historical materialism as a framework for understanding the relationship between Jamaica's political economy, neoliberalism and its subsequent effects on higglering. She argued that:

> The effects of neoliberal ideology have been devastating to poor women, especially poor mothers in developing countries who disproportionately bear the brunt of neoliberal economic policies that absolve multinational corporations of responsibility for providing living wages and employment safety nets. These policies also minimize, through structural adjustment programs, the power of local governments to provide social services to families, often leaving that responsibility to women (Moghadam 1999; Pettman 2006; Reddock 2000). Gender ideologies that separate the public/productive sphere from the private/reproductive sphere thus continue to shape global economic processes, creating hardship for women.
>
> (Brown-Glaude, 2011:66)

[21] *Trading the Other* refers to Western thinking and identity and the disproportionate nature of 'transfer' of knowledge and the global corporatization of the 'local' people, their culture, spirituality and the material reality.

[22] Kingston and St. Andrew Municipal Corporation (KSAMC) previously Kingston and St. Andrew Corporation (KSAC), main function is to monitor and regulate orderly development in the Kingston. See: Jamaican Higglers' Marketing System And The Future Of Kingston (Part 1) - http://jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20101031/focus/focus6.html; Stop treating vendors as criminals - http://jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20130113/letters/letters5.html KSAC to step up registration of vendors - http://www.jamaicaobserver.com/news/KSAC-to-step-up-registration-of-vendors_19233409

The above quote demonstrates how neoliberalism manifests itself through policy reform for economic liberation, creates institutions that encourages people conform to market norms and practices of individualism for the West maintenance of global hegemony. The introduction of foreign transnational companies through, "industrialization by invitation", increased Black working-class women rural to urban migration patterns, as many were in search of employment in places like the Free Zone, tourism and business process outsourcing (BPO) sector, or other opportunities even the increased hardship. Although these “opportunities”, provided jobs for a significant number of Black working-class women, it exposed them to exploitation and sexual harassment (Patricia Ellis, 1986).

This along with high demand for male labor, economic stagnation and high unemployment as a result of global recessions in the 1970s, 1990s and the late 2000s, pushed Black working-class women to become more creative and sought work, such as higglering, in the informal sector. During the 1970s, a period of nationalist and emancipatory struggles, higglers were recognized as legitimate citizens with entrepreneurial spirits and their self-reliance under Michael Manley’s democratic socialist government (Ulysse, 2007). Neoliberal global capitalism liberalized trade, which in hindsight, resulted in dependence on foreign capital and unjust and unstable exchange rate, cultural appropriation, increased unemployment among women, commodification of otherness and the fading of the traditional higgler, and demonization of their reputation.[23]

[23] Neoliberal global capitalism ensured the decline in traditional higglers (farmer-higgers from rural area most of whom are now known as Market vendors) and decline in the number of informal commercial importers (ICIs). As unemployment increased so too did the quantity of town higglers (who acquire their goods from traditional higglers, Chinese wholesalers and local manufacturers and wholesalers from Newport West).

As Linda Tuhiwai Smith proports, the term 'trade' "assumes that human beings and other cultural items [are] commodities or goods and [are] actually available 'for sale'" (89). This underlying meaning of 'trade', in the informal economy, translated to a shift in the identity of a higgler, from a creative entrepreneur (in the 1970s) to lawless criminals (since the 1980s). This cultural shift aligns with global capitalist expansion *development* agenda to facilitate and mask *Trading the Other*. The way in which these imperialist discursive practices constitute power relations in the global South creates a trickle-down effect between gender, color and class which forms the basis of my theorization in this project. Therefore, I argue that in the 21st century higglers 'difference' represents symbols of self-determination and self-definition because neoliberal ideologies considered the welfare-state programs, that once addressed the private and reproductive needs of families, were unprofitable.

Neoliberal Globalization and Ideology of the State

My historical materialist overview demonstrated that neoliberalism is a political structure and practice that encourages individualism, free market economics, deregulation, privatization, free trade, and economic liberalization. With the advent of globalization, "based on an ethic of neoliberalism", accentuating the polarization between the global North and the global South, development was conceived, designed and implemented as global and gendered projects (Moghadam, 2005; Benn, 2000). Neoliberal ideology, driven by racism and intellectual hegemony, shifted the liberal rights of citizens in the global South to mobilize the interests of international financial institutions in the global North (Harvey, 2005; Stiglitz, 2002). The effects from the implementation of policy reforms for economic exploitation, structural adjustment progams (SAPs), led to increased violence, social disturbances and structural impoverishment

and further marginalization of the Black working-class in Jamaica because of the decline in the standard of living and increased unemployment (Kaufman, 1985; Figueroa, 2006; Life and Debt, 2003). Jamaica's development project has been dependent on its integration in a global system that was not designed for its advantage. Because global inequality is central to capitalists' endeavor, emphasis on economic development in Jamaica heavily depends colonial patterns of capital accumulation. Therefore, tourism, and building "Brand Jamaica" and the Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) industries have been central to Jamaica's economic development.

One of Jamaica's main target for its Vision 2030 project, is to make Jamaica "a place of choice to live, work, raise families and do business". Attempts to reform the economy is centered around improving "the country's competitiveness and attractiveness as an investment destination" (Gleaner, 2019)[24]. According to Alexander (2005) a country that is driven by foreign currency and its government is complicit with this practice creates a culture defined by its service rather than by its own sense of autonomy and development. Kincaid echoed this sentiment when she stated, "The government is for sale; anybody from anywhere … for a sum of money can get what he wants" (1988, 47). *Trading the other* has been crippling of the productive sectors since the onset of neoliberal globalization in the 1980s. As a result, national companies and assets were privatized, divested and denationalized to facilitate resort tourism, and since the late 1990s and greater push towards sustainable tourism development, particularly in agri-tourism and community tourism; and BPO. This unequal 'trade' encourages the commodification, oppression and exploitation of Black working-class, especially women.

[24] Jamaica on Track in Being Place to Live, Work, Raise Families and Do Business - http://jamaica-gleaner.com/article/news/20190512/jamaica-track-being-place-live-work-raise-families-and-do-business-jampro

Unequal trading is tantamount to feminized labor in these industries because the global political economy "revolves around the productive, reproductive, and virtual economies, all of which draw on and consists of gendered ideologies, identities, and institutions" (Moghadam, 2005:28). As global capitalism advanced the cultural and ideological homogenization and categorization of "women's work" became the hegemonic form of organizing labor (Mohanty, 1997). The increased neoliberal focus in policymaking, production, investment and trade have generally had a significant impact on gendered dynamics of Jamaica's labor markets. As Brown-Glaude states, "class and gender structures organize Jamaican women's option in the labor market… Where systems of…domination converge, then, we find that [Black] Jamaican women are burdened by unemployment, poverty, and household responsibilities…factors that lead large numbers of them into informal work of higglering" (34). This naturalized identity politics, as a result of industries like tourism and BPO, associated with global capitalism has been tied in particular to the service sector and is highly characterized by low-cost employment, categorically "women's work", in the formal and informal economy.

An examination of the Labor market chapter in the Planning Institute of Jamaica's (PIOJ) 2018 Economic and Social Survey of Jamaica (ESSJ) report shows how the problematic labor agenda designed for Black working-class women. This work migration project facilitates the transfer of labor across national borders and is a part of the government's larger gender mainstreaming project (Bureau of Gender Affairs, 2011). [25] This project highlights the Jamaican

[25] It shows that of the 4 112 applications for overseas employment program, males accounted for 82.1 percent. Additionally, multinationals and expatriate's negotiation with the government reflected demand for low-waged, unskilled laborers in the global North. 6266 expatriates were given the approval to work in the professional and technical occupation category, while 4 112

government's understanding of structural classism and forms the basis of the nation's social hierarchies and pathological gender roles that ultimately accounts for Black working-class women's gendered identities. As of October 2018, 616 600 women listed as labor force participants, 53.4 percent were heads of households; 59.5 percent of women were classified as working outside the labor force, while men continued to account for the larger proportion of the total labor force, representing 53.9 percent, that is 721 100 (ESSJ: 2018).[26] According to PIOJ:

> Of note is that there were more females (72.2 percent) in the prime working-age group (25–54 years) outside the labor force compared with males in the same age group. This high level of economic inactivity among females in the prime working-age group outside the labor force can have social implications and a deleterious impact on economic growth. Remaining outside the labor force to attend school not only affects labor force participation levels but also aids in human capital development and the long-term quality of the workforce
>
> (ESSJ, 2018:307).

This demonstrates that the paradox of 'outside the labor force' supports the role gender discrimination plays in the classification of "women's work" in Jamaica. Additionally, this statement suggests that 'outside the labor force' can be articulated into politicized and symbolic meanings of Black woman*hood* and reflects Black women's (in)visibility. In other words, whilst most women "remain outside the labor force to attend school" their gender marginalizes them to certain classed positions in the labor force because of patriarchal productive relations. I, therefore, argue that the government's gender mainstreaming agenda is an axis of classed oppression in Jamaica's 'development' project.

Jamaicans were permitted to work in the hospitality sector, on farms or in factories in the United States and Canada, with a majority being men (ESSJ, 2018:314).

[26] Persons categorized as "outside the labor force" are persons who are: "At school full time", "Did not want to work" or "Stayed home with dependents"

The interdependence of Asiatic minority, especially Chinese expats, in Jamaica's development project is crucial. The arrival of the Asiatic Chinese and East Indians as indentured workers on the sugar plantations post-emancipation only lasted for a brief period and created an economic niche for themselves within the grocery and wholesale/retail business and has since expanded into the restaurant industry. Syrians/Lebanese immigrants initially came in the 1890s seeking refuge from religious prosecution and many went into banana production and retail business. Presently, this group has established itself as businessmen in commercial, manufacturing and distribution. These upper and middle-class ethnic minority groups, along with whites, dominate the private sector in Jamaica's formal economy and are among the most influential and powerful capitalists in Jamaica.[27] Shortly after Jamaica gained independence in 1962, social mobility, achieved through education, created the Black middle-class in the late 1960s early 1970s. This group, predominantly men, has established itself in politics, government and the education sector. Additionally, over the last five decades the performing arts, and athletics, have created avenues for some from the Black working-class to transition into the middle-class with their talent.

Although, the presence of the Chinese is appreciated among the upper and middle classes for wealth accumulation and so-called development, I observed a buildup of tension among working-class Black Jamaicans who complained that the Chinese are taking control of the productive forces. The problem, however, is centered around their operation as quasi informal-

[27] The history of their socio-political and current economic influence is beyond the scope of this project. However, these minority group, some of whom, have become influential capitalists and member (and or advisors) of the Jamaican state– the Matalon (Lebanese), Lee-Chin (Chinese descent), Blackwell (white), Jarrett (white), Issa (Lebanese), Stewart (white) and Hanna (Lebanese)- based on factors such as family legacies, wealth accumulation, social background, etc. These families have high stakes in banking and commerce, tourism, politics, manufacturing and retail. Notwithstanding this lower-class Jamaicans who invested in their talents, ranging from Black artists to athletes, have some level of community influence given their current middle-class status. For instance, Usian Bolt, Rita Marley and Christopher 'Chris' Gayle.

formal sector as a result of how neoliberal capitalist incentivized Chinese investment relations. Therefore, while the state reports that the Jamaican economy improved by 1.9 percent in 2018 (ESSJ: 2018), the reflection of global economic inequality becomes more pervasive in the nation. This dialectic relationship constructs a false consciousness of *hope* that motivates the working-class that social mobility, especially through education.

Education, became an essential technology for the development of Caribbean societies post-emancipation. The fascination with the hegemonic ideology of education – schooling, qualification, corporatization of the academy and bureaucratic employment- rooted in the politics of respectability and identity politics. According to previous Pro Vice Chancellor Marlene Hamilton for Administration and Special Initiatives at the University of the West Indies (UWI) Mona , although space is provided in the academy for women, it does not mean that their presence "is accompanied by any yielding of male power and privilege"; she also contests the University's claim of 'progressivism' for women as it relates to access, its phallocentric model throughout the University (Hamiltion, 2001). Linda Carty's (1988) case study reveals that the UWI is a politicized arena that fosters the reproduction of gender inequality, that favors men to women, through the system of capitalist patriarchy.

The Gleaner article *When Males Outnumbered Females at UWI* clearly indicate that the University's population comprises of predominantly women (70%), however, through gender mainstreaming, the academy is pushing an agenda to address male marginality. According to the article "The UWI has embraced gender mainstreaming as the process through which it will begin to reverse the trend and ultimately achieve equality of the sexes in terms of numbers" (The

Gleaner, 2018).[28] Interestingly, reversing this trend meant, deregistering students who fail to pay outstanding tuition and sharing student's credit history to Jamaica's two credit Bureau. Ideological codes of subordination have been etched in our consciousness and are reflected in phrases an short poems like:

"Labor for learning before you grow old;
For learning is better than silver or gold.
Silver and gold will vanish away,
But a good education will never decay"

At the primary/elementary level, the teachers made us recite poems like the above with the hope that it becomes a part us because 'Education is the key to success'. These paradoxical statements have been engrained in the Jamaican society's imagination since Michael Manley's political campaigned in 1972. As one becomes politically conscious of the capitalist agenda, immediately, she/he realizes that classism, sexism and patriarchal labor power in Jamaica associated with material conditions, as a result of social, political and economic relations, demonstrate that Black women are devalued. Because while education may be the key to our success, the advent of neoliberalism in Jamaica introduced 'links run things' (networking with the 'right' people will make things happen). These 'links' represent male hegemons, and to a lesser extent female, who usually occupy positions of power in the job market and holds the keys to unlock the doors to success. It is in this political positioning of "otherness", where the constraint of production and reproduction intersects, that the Black working-class woman's experience and identity are systemically linked.

[28] See: When Males Outnumbered Females http://jamaica-gleaner.com/article/20180903/when-males-outnumbered-females-uwi

Considering these systematic colonial patterns of oppression, higglers' are motivated to keep multiple "hands" in a "pardner" to create economic freedom for themselves, according to my youngest participant, and their children, older women in the trade.[29] I found that providing creating economic freedom for their children are their biggest motivators because they do not want their children "to be a higgler like [them]". They do not subscribe to borrowing from the Student's Loans Bureau, because that way, according to the they see where their money goes, they do not have to pay extra and they get their money hassle free. Therefore, pardner systems not only promote community among higglers and economic support but also challenges the University's (neo)colonial logic of economic independence by reclaiming and redefining their work, and by extension their identity as Black working-class women.

This structural hegemony of otherness, connects the reproduction of a colonial consciousness that supports racist, constrained to skin-color, and classed ideologies of Black woman*hood* in Jamaica that is steeped in respectability politics. Color still takes on a particular significance in urban Jamaica because of its relations to visibility and material privileging. This assumption was deduced from my observation of the heavy practice of skin bleaching, particularly among female higglers, and sale of skin lightening products Downtown. Although ninety percent of Jamaicans are predominantly Black, colorism, a taboo subject in the twenty-first century, is or has been a site of internalized racial struggle for some working-class Black (wo)men. The remnants of colonialism and slavery associate lighter skin and straight hair to

[29] The "parder" is a savings arrangement where groups of people each pool an equal amount of money for a given period of time, after which one person gets their "draw" – the lump sum of money. They continue this until everyone gets their lump sum at least once.

beauty, respect, acceptance, social mobility and desirability, despite the development of a nationalist ideology since Jamaica's independence in 1962.

Additionally, the intricacy of capital accumulation at the intersections of class and gender, informs Black women's economic, political and social subordination and accentuates the effects of gender inequality. Former Prime Minister Edward Seaga dialectic summary of his forty-five years tenure in parliament as a first-generation politician since Jamaica's independence speaks not only to the classed and gendered arrangements of the neocolonial state but the government's failure to the Black working-class citizens. He asserts:

> …the poor are the ones who still continue to suffer. Their lot, subject as they are no injustice, poor education and little prospects of prosperity, has not changed from 40 years ago. The "haves" and the "have-nots'" problem that existed some 40 years ago still exists today. And it's an embarrassment to all of us, that more than 40 years have passed, and this problem is still with us, when in fact some of these problems can be solved if they are treated as priorities. [30]
>
> *Brian Meeks, Envisioning Caribbean Futures Jamaican Perspectives*

Edward Sega's speech infers that there are two Jamaicas on the island. Its binary representation of the "haves" and "have nots" is reproduced downtown. The "haves" adhere to the hegemonic masculinist notions of respectability and represents the privileged segment in the nation, in comparison to the "have nots", who live along the margins of society. Poverty, here is presented as a gendered social code of inequality in a political colonial polity. Within the broader structural organization of productive arrangement, power is fully operationalized through institutionalized hegemonic systems of hetero-patriarchy, masculinity and the capitalist class. Masculinity in Jamaica is characterized by male violence and 'respect for authority'. These are important characteristics of a man's identity in the public and private spheres; and are equivocally

[30] See full article: Edward Seaga (2004). *Two Jamaicas at Odds,* Jamaica Gleaner.

important constituents of the Jamaican political process. In retrospect, respect in this case is giving power to men who can seamlessly, lie, scheme and talk his way out of anything or work his way to the top (Kaufman, 1985). Power is also connected to the concept of government. "[T]he state and the government is referred to in the singular, personified, paternal form: Government" (Kaufman, 1985:173). Based on my observation in the field Downtown, Michael Kaufman's concept of government is not only exercised in the formal economy but also in the parallel economy, which has its laws analogous to state institutions.

Hetero-patriarchy is translated to the dominance by hetero-sexual middle-class men, whose masculinity is *legitimized* within the state, over the nation.[31] [32] Middle-class masculinity is often challenged by heterosexual working-class Black men's masculinity (and to a lesser extent women). Although their masculinity was constructed in oppositional consciousness, it is characterized as [toxic] *illegitimate* by the middle class, and by extension the nation.[33] Nonetheless, men, (whether middle or working-class) living outside this hegemonic border, gets no respect from other men and women who do not conform to such power and politics. "It is not the case, however, that [these working-class] men are marginalized relative to women as a whole. Rather, structures of power treat these men as women in relation to the power of the state and groups above them in the class structure. Indeed, while middle-class Jamaican women may

[31] See: Linden Lewis (2004). "Masculinity, the Political Economy of the Body, and Patriarchal Power in the Caribbean," in *Gender in the 21 St Century: Caribbean Perspectives, Visions, and Possibilities*, ed. Barbara Bailey and Elsa Leo-Rhynie, p 236–61; Kaufman, M. (1985).
Jamaica Under Manley: Dilemmas of Socialism and Democracy. Westport, CT: Lawrence Hills.

[32] See: The Gleaner (2019). 30 Years of Political Scandals … Lack Of Adequate Accountability In Corruption Allegations Erodes Public Trust – NIA. http://jamaica-gleaner.com/article/news/20190811/30-years-political-scandals-lack-adequate-accountability-corruption

[33] See: Tafari-Ama, I., (2006). *Blood Bullets and Bodies: Sexual Politics Below Jamaica's Poverty Line.* Kingston: MultiMedia Communications

be making progress, they do not displace middle-class men in power. Women across classes are still subject to patriarchal power" (Thame and Thukar, 2014:14).

Michael Kuafman's concept of respect for authority and government are legacies adopted from Jamaica's colonial history and are being used to keep women and femininity in subordination. Consequently, the heteronormative construct of femininity is classed and sexualized, and parallels gendered identity and performance in the public domain. As Reiland Rabaka (2009) rightfully argues, our Black identity does not exist outside colonialism; and colonialism is centered around the paralysis and retardation of the historical and development processes of colonized peoples (p.46). Cultural patriarchy generally excludes 'difference' as an established norm in the discourse on sexuality in Jamaica. Therefore, I argue that feminism in Jamaica should radically confront and decentralize borders of hegemonic masculinity that feeds into this growing misogyny in Jamaica.

Feminism in Jamaica

> Within the Caribbean regional diversity of ethnicity, class, language and religion there is an ideological unity of patriarchy, of female subordination and dependence. Yet there is also a vibrant living tradition of female economic autonomy, of female-headed households and of a family structure in which men are often marginal. So, Caribbean gender relations are a double paradox: of patriarchy within a system of matrifocal and matrilocal families; and of domestic ideology coexisting with the economic independence of women. The root of this paradoxical situation lies in colonialism.
>
> (Janet Momsen, Women and Change in the Caribbean, 1) [34]

[34] Momsen, J. H. (1993). *Women & Change in the Caribbean: A Pan-Caribbean Perspective*. London: James Currey Ltd.

Janet Momsen (1993) highlights the “double paradoxes” between Caribbean women’s autonomy and public/private patriarchy and Caribbean women’s autonomy and capitalism. However, in speaking about the genealogy of Caribbean women’s resilience and adaptability, throughout her analysis of the impact of global restructuring on Caribbean women, she never referred to patriarchy as a system in and of itself. Patriarchy existed before capitalism (Eisenstein, 1999) and is arbitrated by race, class, [ethnicity] and culture in the region (Antrobus, 2004). It is a way of *thinking* as a result of socialization (hook, 2004). It is a social and political system that maintains that men and masculinity are innately dominant and superior to maintain power through various forms of psychological terrorism and violence (hook, 2004). Walby (1990) concludes that such patriarchal structures interlock and interweave with capitalism. Capitalist patriarchy, then, becomes synonymous to Hill Collins (2003) "matrix of domination", a paradigm that places emphasis on various systems of privilege/oppression that do not operate independent of one another.

With the complexity of gendered 'difference' and how gender, sex and class were reconfigured by capitalist global governance structures, I argue that higglers’ social realities in relation to gendered power systems are integral factors that informs their political struggles. Their historical roots and connections to the streets and markets of Downtown, Kingston have helped define their identity and life. Higglers have historically fought for their right to work, their right as Jamaican citizens, against patriarchy and sexism and classism. Their negotiation of space and rights to space continues to be a struggle combined with the state’s policies and structural violence. ‘Difference’ then becomes a basic province of higglering as a ‘woman’s domain’. Gender is not a replacement for women and a gendered analysis does not merely speak about making higglers visible in Jamaica's 'development' project. Rather, it is about the systemic

mode of organizing 'difference' and how it is being communicated to the nation to reproduce gender blindness.[35] This is evident in sociologists Barry Chevannes and Janet Brown's study on gender socialization and masculinities. They assert:

> We as project directors were reinforced in our belief that Caribbean men need their own "gender agenda." The word "gender" in the minds of most of our informants has become equivalent to women's issues. Discussion of gender usually implies redress of women's experiences of patriarchy and subordination with men cast as the perpetrators by their direct action or by default. (Brown and Chevannes 1998, 3) [36]

Conversations with Nashan Miller, Research Officer at the Bureau of Gender Affairs, while in the field, was centralized around the vague recognition between equality of the sexes and the intellectual and popular imagination of working-class Jamaicans. He too believes the nations “gender agenda” is centralized on “women and women empowerment” and provided some statistics to solidify his claim that men and boys are "being overlooked and left behind". Nashan Miller's focus on the nation as a site for the configuration of gender 'difference' presents questions about the construction of "men" and "masculinity" in Jamaica and how this structure is used as a vehicle of privilege in gender/class power relation of and between men and women and woman and women. The higglers I interviewed confirmed this unequal gender/class system is a discursive practice. When specifically asked about the gender relations in the trade, it was no surprise that a majority of their responses spoke to their complicity with how hetero-patriarchy is organized in the market spaces because according to many higglers “mi nuh come yah fi count

[35] By nation, I am referring to members with collective beliefs in a common origin, history, destiny, constitute themselves as a community and "lay claim to a specified territory and political representation, ranging from cultural autonomy to political statehood" (Sinha, 2004:255)

[36] Brown, J. and Chevannes, B. *Why Man Stay So: An Examination of Gender Socialization in the Caribbean*. In Barriteau, E. (2003). *Confronting Power and Politics*. A Feminist Theorizing of Gender in Commonwealth Caribbean Societies. Duke University Press.

cow, mi come yah fi suck milk" (I came here to drink milk, not count cow). [37] When I probed further on this issue, their focus drifted towards identity politics and performance as a means of survival.[38] In this instance, 'difference' in its basic province informs Black women's lives.

Assessing gender politics with an understanding of the simultaneity of oppression is at the root of Black feminism's comprehension of political reality and the most significant ideological contributions to Black feminist thought (Smith, 1995). In the early 1970s to 1990s women came into feminism from different paths – personal, professional and political and their lived experiences marked the beginning of a politicized consciousness of what is it to be female in a society that privileges males" (Antrobus, 2004:39-40). Hence, within Caribbean activism, feminist genealogy was organically rooted in the slogan 'the personal is political'. [39] Their recognition of women's oppression in the public and private spheres fueled a common vision of challenging patriarchal ideologies that are being reproduced as gender ideology. [40]

Black feminism emerged as a "reactionary" force with the second wave of American women's movement against "a sexist social order that systemically denied all women full human rights" and their own struggle for racial equality (hooks, 1981). Caribbean feminists Christine Barrow (1998), Rawwida Baksh-Soodeen (1998), Rhoda Reddock (2007) argued that women in the Caribbean are not marginalized in the same way as other 'Third World' and Euro-American

[37] "Mi nuh come yah fi count cow. Mi come yah fi suck milk", a Jamaican proverb that suggest that higglers generally mind their own business as their ultimately in the marketplace to make some money. They are not likely to involve themselves in issues that do not concern them.
[38] See Chapter 2
[39] The slogan 'the personal is political' first gained prominence from Black feminists in the U.S in the 1960s. However, it a mantra for all Black (wo)men and (Wo)men of Color who were (and still are) subjected to and came to a political realization of their personal struggles against racial, sexual, gender and class oppression brought on by state intervention and relationships from the 'local' and 'global'.
[40]Caribbean feminism originated as 'research' projects in the 1970s– the Women in the Caribbean Project (WICP), Women and Gender Studies Project and Women and Development Unit (WAND) - under the umbrella of the University of the West Indies to ensure women's contribution to regionalism and nation-building was recognized.

counterparts. For this reason, Caribbean feminist theorization and approach to women's political struggles in the region ought to be "indigenous"; in that, although influenced by U.S Black Feminist and other feminist framework outside the region, the centrality of issues of 'race,' ethnicity and color to the sociohistorical specificity of the region must be given (Mohammed, 1998; Reddock, 2007).

In the Jamaican society middle class - the People's National Party Women's Movement (PNPWM) and working-class - the Sistren Women's Theatre Collective – were two radical women's groups that emerged in the 1970s to confront gender inequality in the public/private domains and conscientize women. To date the Sistren's Collective continues to empower communities at the grassroots level through gender relations training a conscientization, while the PNPWM has gone silent and "reduced to issuing the occasional news release" (Observer, 2011) and the BGA Community liaison Unit to periodically conscientize institutions such as schools and community events on a needs basis (based on these institutions request).[41] The Sistren's Collective, the BGA and PNPWM proves that 'difference' has the capacity to cross ontological, epistemological and political borders and boundaries. To assert the power and right to name one's location and struggle is part of 'setting [the] agenda'; It is part of defining feminism' (Nnaemeka, 2001). For Caribbean feminists and women's movement, naming based on the politics of location, was an act of resisting white feminist ideology from the West and patriarchal gendered systems by a way of confronting their power and bringing their differences to the center.

[41] See: Where is the Once Vibrant Women's Movement - http://www.jamaicaobserver.com/NEWS/Where-is-the-once-vibrant-PNP-Women-s-Movement-

The advent of neoliberal economic restructuring in the region witnessed the decline in radical feminist/women's activism in the region from the mid-1990s because of the increasing feminist politics, marked by international mainstreaming projects and 'gender experts' (McDonald, 2016). Regarding what she claims to be a 'watered down' consciousness of women's activism, Patricia Mohammed (1998) states:

> The general feeling is that with the globalization of the women's movement; the co-optation of governments and international organizations in the struggle for gender equity; the introduction of women and gender studies in education; and the career opportunities available in flourishing non-governmental projects, the status and condition of 'woman' has become less important to the idea of feminism. Instead the term 'gender' is used loosely to refer to some vague acknowledgment of equality between the sexes, as if the invocation of the word itself, liberally sprinkled in the right places and documents, has succeeded in achieving the goals of a feminist project launched centuries ago.

Mohammed's sentiments resonated with scholars across the region who had mixed feelings on the issue. For instance, Joycelin Massiah (2004) and June Castello (2006) questioned whether there is a feminist movement in the region and its relevance, while radical Guyanese feminist Andaiye to no longer identified with the movement because of the regions acceptance of the transnational "gender mainstreaming" shift in to the project (Antrobus 2004).[42] Mohammed's (1998) concludes with a recommendation for a 'feminist' and 'woman's' agenda where inclusive alliance and coalition-building among women and men with a feminist consciousness, to radically contest patriarchal privilege in its many forms going into the 21st century. After all, the region's colonial history was enhanced by the blood and sweat of early anti-imperialist and anti-colonialist women's activists and 'radical (m)others' like Amy Ashwood Garvey, Nanny of the

[42] Gender mainstreaming is defined in Jamaica's National Policy for Gender Equality refers to a strategy that the government will use to assess the implications for women and men of any policies, plans, programs, and projects in any area and at all levels and achieve gender equality.

Maroon, Una Marson, Amy Bailey of Jamaica and Christina Lewis, Gema Ramkeesoon and Audrey Jeffers of Trinidad and Tobago (Reddock, 2007).

Conclusion

In this chapter, I examined the social-political relations of gender, color and class in Jamaica as a basis for analyzing Black working-class women's encounters with neoliberal global capitalism and the mechanisms of Black hegemonic patriarchal oppressive power structures. My arguments were constructed based on the sociohistorical understanding of Jamaica's political landscape and how the conception of 'difference' is organized. My theorization of 'difference' attempted to provide and understanding of the connection between Black women, as subjects inside a capitalist patriarchal matrix, the "Othering" agenda of the Jamaican state and the almost non-existent feminist project in Jamaica. From this, I centered my arguments on hegemonic masculinist practices, privilege and power in the process of marginalizing, silencing and excluding Black working-class women from the public/productive domain.

CHAPTER TWO

Of Reputation and Respectability: An Exploration of Higglers Subjectivity Downtown

Introduction

This chapter will examine the higglers' reputation as a response to the gendered politics of respectability in their everyday encounter with capitalism and masculinities that legitimizes patriarchy downtown. In doing so, I interrogate Peter Wilson's (1973) notion of respectability and reputation and how it guides the cultural nuances that constitute name and location, and identity and belonging. Wilson purports that the islands of the English-speaking Caribbean have two opposing but dialectically interconnected value systems that are structured around respectability and reputation and supports persistent competition among individuals within communities or what he calls "crab antics" (Wilson, 1973). He defines respectability as "a moral force behind the coercive power of colonialism and neocolonialism" (1973:233) that the middle class, especially women, inherit and reproduce through institutions such as schools, marriage and the church (Wilson, 1973). In contrast, reputation is a counter-system to respectability that involves adaptation, self-definition and resistance and a defense strategy which lower working-class men distinguish themselves from women in public domains like the street corners (Wilson, 1973).

Wilson's idea of respectability and reputation connect higglers' identity to gendered systems and nuanced cultural notions of femininity and masculinity. It is within this politically imposed position, where the necessities of production and reproduction intersect, that higglers' material conditions and identity give structural form to Jamaica. Additionally, the complex nature of capitalism at the intersection of color and gender situates higglers' political, economic and social subordination and compound the effect of their economic and social inequality.

Capitalist patriarchal relation to production and reproduction then becomes institutionalized into a collective consciousness that devalues Black woman*hood,* which is defined in Jamaica through the patriarchal system of mother*hood*, that aligns with systems of reputation. With this understanding of Jamaica's gendered commitments, colonial discourse of citizenship as an imagined and performed status, and the use of legislative mechanism ensure the systemic exclusion of higglers' in public spaces, particularly the labor market. What does gender power relations look like downtown?

> *…you have to leave something (money) for the thieves…because you can't tell them that 'you didn't make nothing today' because they watch you*
>
> (Gene Marie, June 26, 2019)

> *They (thieves) come out before day in the morning like 1, 2, 3 o'clock to rob the people. I sit down here last night and one come to search a girl there so and he went to search 2 more and mi seh (I said) something to them and they start fan me off and said that mi supposed to dead (I should die). I just jump up on them and said "yes, how long you believe you are going to reign, a years me deh yah (I have been here for years), and you doing this but your time soon come… mi nuh 'fraid a yuh! (I am not afraid of you!). Anything you up to me up to it tonight"…Most of the country people (people from rural areas) are afraid, they not like me who is outspoken …because they fear that they will come shoot them. They just sit down silent.*
>
> (Scooby, July 30, 2019)

> *Is just the fittest of the fit survive because I am a single mother and I have to go out there and do something to survive because I am not turning to prostitution …You don't know who to talk to or what to say or where to go because you're afraid people will harm you, expose you or discriminate you because of the life you live. Living my life in and outside the streets, I got raped by even family members, but I never gave up because I believe in God and He kept me.*
>
> (Coolz, July 23, 2019)

> *Because I'm here they think I'm easy…*[43] *There are some men, because I am brown and they see me selling they think I am easy. Him look down on my front (she usually wears leggings)…him see what him like, what him want, come over and demand what him want. Most of them a sell but some of them just a look somebody.*[44]
>
> (Shantel, June 24, 2019)

[43] *Easy* in this regard means, easy to 'claim' as his own or easy to engage in sexual intercourse
[44] *Look somebody* another code of claiming a woman as personal 'property'

Gene-Marie, Scooby, Coolz and Shantel expressed power as a specific and integral element of manhood and a tool of extortion and for exerting masculinity. The gendered power dynamic inherently has a hegemonic masculinist structure that coerces Black working-class women to have a "reputation" of subordination, fear, resilience, adaptability and resistance. I use the above quotes to give an understanding of how higglers, engage with epistemic codes of hegemonic masculinity Downtown - the backyard of several state-created "ghetto traps".[45] Social behaviors and relations, from these communities, infiltrate the streets of Downtown forcing workers to either adapt, comply or leave the space. These women also speak to higglers' objectification, gender violence, and exploitation, methodologies used by the capitalist class in the (neo)colonial economic system, that persistently shape Black working-class women's everyday experiences. Historically, higglers have been contesting gendered power systems with their own self-defined codes of respectability and reputation. The practice of distrust, 'bad-mind' and desire for intergenerational mobility is etched in a value system that is interlocked and interwoven with their economic and political realities.[46]

What's in a name from a district?

The marginalization of higglers (as subjects) and their label (as objects) in both capitalism and patriarchal discourses of resistance, adaptation and self-definition.

> *Mi an yuh kyah develop Jamaica mi an yuh can jus mek suggestion. If yuh even guh ova di Observer (the local press), dem ah guh seh - weh yuh come from? Dat (higglers suggestion) nah come pon no headline. Yuh affi block road fi get headline.*
>
> (Wes, July 9, 2019)[47]

[45] Coined by Imani Tafari-Ama in *Blood Bullets and Bodies*, the ghetto trap is a cyclical and inescapable economic/social trap (of poverty, violence, and crime) that marginalizes residents of ghetto/garrison communities. 'Town' or downtown is the backyard to communities like Tivoli Gardens, Southside, Greenwich Farm and Fletchers Land.

[46] Bad-mind is an expression that connotes meanness and feelings of jealousy and envy.

[47] Translation – You and I can't develop Jamaica, we can only make suggestions. Even if you go to *The Observer*, they would ask, where you come from? What we say will not make the headline. You have to block the roads to get a headline.

> *Mi affi guh roun deh to the fireman an seh "listen, di whole a we a black people, yuh tink dis fair? We deh here as 'oman an wi tings a bun out an unno only a out fi dem (Chinese wholesale) fyah?" Di fyah man seh is not him, a di man in charge seh dem fi guh roun deh suh fi out fi dem (Chinese) fyah.*
>
> (Tallis, July 3, 2019)[48]

For higglers, it is not just about skin color. It is about the mindset that comes from a specific location of power and which different color/ethnicity (black, brown (natural or chemically induced through skin bleaching), Indian, Chinese, etc.) creates and imagined sense of belonging, asserts or commands power. Equally concerning to some higglers, like Tallis and Wes, are the 'classing' 'gendering' and 'coloring' of bodies Downtown. Both higglers and feminists see and speak about these 'difference'. Furthermore, because these classifications of differences are embedded in the measurability of power, higglers' 'difference' becomes institutionalized and the politics of gender 'difference' shape their socio-cultural and political being. Consequently, power becomes associated with practices of gender inequality and codes of "Othering". Therefore, we can now understand the power dynamics that commands a certain level of respect based on gender, class status, and color based on your location.

Within the borders of Downtown, the social order of business consists of the Multinational Corporations (MNCs) and Ministries, Departments and Government Agencies (MDAs) in the business district and the internal trade system in the market district. The internal trade system is subdivided into three main sections: designated government markets/arcades/open spaces, local stores and wholesalers and the streets (legally – temporarily

[48] Translation - I had to go to the fireman and say "listen, the all of us are Black people, you think this is fair? We are here as women and our things are burning and you're only putting out their (Chinese wholesale) fire?" The fireman said the man in charge told them to put out their fire.

during festive seasons like Christmas and illegally). Traders working in government spaces and the streets are predominately Black higglers. The Chinese wholesalers and retailers mainly provide goods to higglers as a ‘cheaper’ alternative. A few wholesale outlets are Black-owned, by higglers who previously sold on the streets, and they specialize in selling mainly female clothing. Even fewer, are Black-owned stores that focus on manufacturing and selling furniture and appliances. It was no surprise that 40% of my sample aspire to own their store in the next five to ten years because they envision this as either a sign of upward social mobility or a retirement plan. The Syrians/Lebanese and East Indian traders own the furniture, appliances and jewelry stores downtown.

Government spaces attract a fee from three hundred to five hundred Jamaican dollar per day per stall space or a yearly vending fee from $3000 to $6000 depending on the location of the market/arcade/space.[49] Higglers selling at these locations are required to register their business to get the requisite license and permits. By registering their business higglers have the possibility of acquiring a "low-interest home loans” from the National Housing Trust (NHT) or other social benefits from the National Insurance Scheme (NIS). Hence, they are formally, recognized by the government but not treated as part of the labor systems which operate within the context of the law. There is no provision within the labor laws which provide protection to higglers’ as there are to women employed by the government and no redress provided by the Ministry of Labor.

Whereas the craft market and coronation market are typically occupied, I observed some arcades were virtually empty and others, empty. It is important to mention that, since the

[49] Craft traders (higglers) in the craft market refused to share their vending fees.

destruction of the Redemption Arcade, by fire, in 2017, participants from my study mentioned that no efforts has been made to refurbish the space. Instead, they were told by the government to work in the roofless arcade and pay reduced fees. Some higglers who previously occupied this arcade can be seen selling just outside the borders of this burnt structure. Selling outside these borders can be interpreted as refusal; refusal to be treated as second-class citizens in the nation; their refusal to be the 'othered' class; an exercise of agency to claim a space in the informal sector.

Despite Kingston and St. Andrew Municipal Corporation (KSAMC) attempts to seek partnerships to improve market conditions and expansion (*The Gleaner*, 2015), having received the funds to reconstruct the arcades, higglers are restricted from gaining access to these market spaces. The higglers working along these bordered structures were unable to explain their inability to occupy the space. Participants who sold goods illegally in the streets generally expressed that they refused to pay the vending fee because the state is only interested in collecting their money. They expressed that essential facilities such as restrooms are not easily accessible, as they have to pay each time they go to restrooms. Higglers' selling in the Coronation market pays twenty Jamaican dollars to access the restroom provided for them. [50] Higglers selling on the street side pay twenty Jamaican dollars to access the public restroom at Saint William Grant Park at North Parade or pay fifty Jamaican dollars access to other businesses restroom. To access the restrooms, that are usually guarded by security, in restaurant franchises like KFC and Burger King, a receipt is needed; hence higglers either purchase an item

[50] The state of the Coronation market's restroom is deplorable – it is poorly lit and higglers use buckets to flush the toilets and wash their hands. According to the higglers, the fees they pay goes towards tissue papers, water and the female, from KSAMC, who cleans and guards the entrance of the restroom.

from the menu or “fren up the security guards” (befriend or flirt with the security guards). Therefore, I argue that higglers' rights to space continue to be a racialized class struggle that is sanctioned under the control of the capitalist patriarch appropriator.

The social order of business Downtown is hierarchal by nature - MDAs and MNCs at the top, wholesalers and store owners in the middle and traders working in government spaces and streets at the bottom. Jalée (1977) cautions us to think of how the capitalist state establishes means of coercion and repression through a combination of institutions that disguises the oppression of the state apparatus and presents a "false front on equality". The laws and policies that guide the state apparatus practices *de facto* social discrimination to maintain the ideology of the upper-class privileges, in this case the MDAs and MNCs. Hence, I argue that respectability politics and identity politics are distinguishing features of the social order of business Downtown. It is focused on eliminating the "undesirable elements", especially higglers who fail to comply, to create better conditions for the relocation of prospective capitalists and business owners. According to Country girl:

> *Sometimes, yuh guh a Darling Street police station yuh can’t even guh in. An when yuh guh in to make a complaint dem a tell yuh yuh affi wait. An yuh nuh have time fi dat. When yuh guh dung deh even the senior officers a one a di worse set a people fi talk to. Instead a dem tek the complaint from yuh, dem give yuh attitude…most of the thieves, they watch the police, and don’t think they working alone… they have all 3,4,5 a dem work together… and then yuh have police weh work with them sometime suh people nah go really open up to the police like dat... cause, dem ‘fraid …den yuh a guh hear seh yuh a informa. Every garrison have poison suh, yuh can’t really trust police… 80% a di police dem against vendas…*[51]

[51] Translation – Sometimes when you go to the Darlington Street police station you can’t even go inside. And when you go in to make a complaint, they tell you, you have to wait, and you don’t have time for that. When you go down there to the senior officers it seems, are the worst set of people to talk to. Instead of taking your complaint they give you an attitude… most of the thieves, they watch the police and don’t think they working alone…they have all 3, 4, 5 of them working together, ... and then you have the police who work with them sometimes so people won't really open up to the police like that… because they are afraid… then you hear that you are an informer. Every garrison has poison so you can't really trust police…80% of the police against vendors…

(June 25, 2019)

The market district, more so the designated market spaces, consists of multiple enclaves and includes pockets closed to outsiders. Many of the spaces found in this district are said to be based on divisions and tensions between the Jamaica Labor Party (JLP) and the Peoples National Party (PNP) supporters (Ulysse, 2007). This section of downtown is especially known to be caught in the midst of politically motivated and territorial war. Thus, when I asked higglers in the market district about their major challenge with working downtown, 19 out of 20 mentioned the issue of theft and distrust (of both police and other vendors). The anomaly, Seirta, stated her biggest challenge is the slow days as she no longer has to "run from the police or the metro (now KSAMC)" (July 29, 2019).

Since the merger of the Island Special Constabulary Force (ISCF) with the Jamaican Constabulary Force (JCF) in 2014, higglers goods are rarely being confiscated by police officers, unless it's a joint action between the JCF and KSAMC.[52] Goods were being confiscated because wholesalers and store owners would often complain that higglers were reducing their profits by blocking the entrance of their establishment and deterring customers from entering (Brown-Glaude, 2002; *The Gleaner*, 2015). The government's removal of the ISCF in the streets, to channel more resources for fighting major crimes in the garrison/ghetto made higglers more vulnerable to thieves in the market district. This The ISCF was needed to restore 'order' and maintain that "false front on equality" as their appearance – both physical and figuratively –

[52] The ISCF was the supplementary arm of the JCF that focused mainly on predial, larceny and road traffic patrol and investigations. This segment of law enforcement was often seen at hospitals, government ministries, town centers of all parish capitals and market districts.

served as a 'security' blanket for both middle-class wholesalers/store owners and by default, lower working class higglers' respectively.

Currently, the physical structure of police stations – 2 in the business district and 2 in the market district (to serve designated locations) – replaces the "the false front on equality" since the stations assigned to the market district also serve adjoining garrison communities. Hence, I argue that the history of the emergence of the JCF highlights that the mandate of the police was to serve and protect middle-class interests. Additionally, 64% of my participants are from ghetto/garrison communities and the relationship between the police and residence from these communities is one with a history of lack of respect and distrust (Tafari-Ama, 2006; Levy, 2001) for Black bodies and lives. While no other participant, besides Countrygirl, mentioned the corrupt nature of the JCF, this issue has sparked controversial public debates, leaving many Jamaicans with the belief that the majority of the police officers are corrupt (The Observer, 2019).[53] Countrygirl's response provides another plausible reason for distrust between some higglers and the police.

> *You know seh Chiney people nuh fight gainst one another. If one a dem open a store and dem nah use it, them find another chiney man put in the store. We nuh think suh as black people.* [54]
>
> (Tallis, *July 3, 2019*)

> *...the same women you talk with daily, watch you from a distance and send a thief to rob you if you make a sale… worse if nothing nah gwan fi dem (worse if they don't make a sale)*
>
> (Marsha, July 10, 2019)

[53] See – Corruption Haunts the Police Force - http://www.jamaicaobserver.com/news/corruption-haunts-police-force-jamaicans-believe-more-than-half-of-jcf-tainted_157127?profile=1470

[54] You know that Chinese people don't fight against one another. If they open a store and are not using it, they find another Chinese man to work in the store. We don't think like this as Black people

If you not a strong warrior you can't be here because sometimes when you have your last somebody thief you or send somebody to rob you or as some say obeah you… it hard as a higgler

(Serita, July 29, 2019)

She come yah come see me and from she come she start buy everything [I sell] pon mi stall. Watch her… who God bless no man curse [55]

(Joy Fuller, *August 3, 2019*)

Tallis, Marsha, Serita and Joy Fuller, situates distrust among higglers to what we Jamaicans call 'bad-mind'. Bad-mind is an expression Jamaicans use to refer to someone's feeling of jealousy and envy for what she/he has accomplished. This suppressed mentality is usually followed by physical or 'spiritually perceived' violence – that Jamaicans describe as grudgeful. By spiritually perceived violence, I refer to what many Jamaicans call 'Obeah' – a belief system rooted in African ideals of spirituality that the colonized used for healing and protection against insurgents in slave rebellions. However, the colonizers outlawed this Pan African retention practice and distorted its cultural value. As such, bad-mind can be associated with cultural divides for competitive gains and a confrontational way to eliminate the competition. This hostility can also be perceived as a product of inherent disunity among the Black working-class. Therefore, I argue that the deep-rooted longing for better material conditions and possible upward social mobility (more so for their children) that defines higglers' material reality, forms a dialectical relationship between the value of "respectability" and "reputation".

[55] She came here and saw me and since she has been here, she buys everything I sell on my stall. Look at her… who God bless no man curse

Despite the social order of business, higglers' self-definition oftentimes contradict and define their sociopolitical boundaries. Ms. Pam summarized my point best when I asked her what she achieved from vending. Her response:

> *Me achieve a lot out of it. I own a house in portmore and a van I use to transport my goods…I am not poor. I don't consider myself poor because I can eat what I want. I can send my children to school. I don't drink. I don't smoke. I don't party... I have nothing to waste my money on... I started doing addition to my house and I plan to finish it in the next five years, which, if I get another house I don't mind because I want to venture in real estate. It's not easy working here, sun come burn you, rain come wet you. I don't want to work a town forever…I set up my thing (stall) here but I don't feel safe but mi learn fi see, blind, hear and deaf and stay in my lane.*
>
> (Ms. Pam, July 10, 2019).

Ms. Pam's "truthful identity" links how social conditions can influence a Black woman's standpoint and how her imagined reality strengthened and shaped her social and economic reality and validates her own self-definition. Ms. Pam chose to improve her material conditions by learning to utilize the "master's tools" (Audre Lorde, 1984), and engaged in her own process of self-defined 'difference', within the "see, blind, hear and deaf" culturally normalized silenced space and made them her strengths. Higglers imagined reality as a coping mechanism and an alternative pathway to their own self-definition reveals their "truthful identity" as a female breadwinner and their own liberation. Hence, how higglers utilize the master's tool depends on how they choose to adapt, define or resist the respectability and identity politics.

For instance, Lucy from the craft market in the business district defines herself as a "craft trader" - a state assigned title that promotes segregation and refused to be called a higgler or vendor. The label "higgler" or "vendor" suggests her awareness of the middle-class notions of respectability and her attempt to (re)imagine/(re)invent herself and accept her (re)naming as a

"craft trader" carries a less-negative class connotation as a self-defined respectable businesswoman. I got a similar reaction from Lexi, who shied away from defining herself as a "vendor" in the market district, and (re)defined herself as a "businesswoman" and gave me her business card at the end of our conversation. Other participants used the name "higgler" and "vendor" interchangeably throughout the interviews.

Hence, although my participants entered the trade for several different reasons - as a result of dropping out of high school because of poverty or teenage pregnancy (44%), taking over their mother's business (12%), quitting/losing their job in the formal economy (16%), to offset the cost of education (4%), domestic violence (4%) or grew tired of being a housewife (12%) – two used the "master's house" (Lorde, 1984) to (re)define themselves and comply with the hegemonic notion of respectability. Notwithstanding this, all participants did not consider themselves as "poor" because neoliberal capitalism changed the meaning of poverty in the free market society, by making it a more fluid identity. The consistency of the "us/we" vs "them" in the participant's language and nonverbal cues, suggests their awareness of their lower working-class status irrespective of their location Downtown.

> *I am responsible for this stand (her cart)… I wash it and clean it up and then I return it and restock fit or the next day… This (location in the business district) was not my choice. I was placed here…this (signals to the stand) is a franchise of *name of conglomerate* so I am more privileged than others. There are other franchises in Half-Way-tree so I don't go in Half-way-tree…I chose downtown. We have a license to peddle anywhere in Kingston.*
>
> *(Lee, July 8, 2019)*

> *Because of the location we at…we expect to get tourists but we don't… the Minister of Tourism, we pose this question to him, "What is happening to craft market in downtown Kingston?" because it has been neglected for a long time. You know what he said? (pause) Him seh, Kingston is not a tourist destination, it is for business and they are thinking about it.*

(Lucy, July 16, 2019)

> *Oh my Jesus, that is the big problem (garbage and debris in a pile beside her) I have. Every night I come I quarrel. Sometimes for days or weeks it's there. If you don't behave bad sometimes they don't come take it up. I argue with the market people who come and collect money and sometimes I run them and tell them to look at the condition of the market... Sometimes it don't make sense you complain because they close their ears.*
>
> *(Scooby, July 30, 2019)*

As I write, I recall witnessing the assertive stance of the KSAMC officer - tall, slim, Black man – with a nonchalant look on his face and a receipt book in his hand, as Scooby, negotiate her place and space in the market district. I juxtaposed Lee's, Lucy's (business district) and Scooby's (market district) to demonstrate how higglers' negotiation of place, is influenced by location and the state's self-interest. In other words, within the social order of business, there is a further ranking of higglers in the internal trade system, based on class self-interest. This creates a contradiction that can make compliant higglers have a false sense of (be)longing while promoting separation and complicity in their oppression.

The Social Order of Masculinities Downtown

By examining the social order of business Downtown, it becomes clear that the idea of (be)longing is gendered. In Jamaica women's identities are culturally constructed through (m)otherhood and confined in a hegemonic masculinist power structure in which they must participate. Since the implementation of neoliberal structural policies, patriarchal sexualized attributes of femininity – incompetent, fearful and dependent on husbands and baby fathers as breadwinners have shifted –and violence has been used to enforce gender politics. Patriarchal, discriminatory and violent cultural patterns of women's oppression range from homicide to domestic violence to honor killings/femicide by a woman's patriarchal "property owner" is being

justified by the ideology of dominance.[56] Patriarchy, therefore, is critical to women's subordination as violence, a system of hegemony, becomes a way of claiming or asserting masculinity (Connell, 2005).

Since the establishment of the Jamaican state, the middle class - brown and Black men, proclaimed themselves as dominant forces of class/state power through corruption, the appropriation of institutions of popular culture, "as well as with norms of *phallic* power in his political embodiment" (Tafari-Ama 2006:231) to maintain control over subordinated groups. Inherently, middle-class masculinity becomes hegemonic and the Blackface for the *invisible hands* of capitalism from the West. When I speak of hegemony, I am referring to power domination that is embedded in social institutions by way of respectability. Hegemony is not based on force but is achieved within a balance of forces. Hence, hegemonic masculinity is different from the "male sex role" and constructed in relation to women and subordinated masculinities (Connell, 1987:184). Connell explains "the public face of hegemonic masculinity is not necessarily what powerful men are but what sustains power and what large numbers of men are motivated to support" (1987:185).

Similarly, in an exploratory essay on conceptualizing difference in Caribbean feminist theory, Rhoda Reddock (2007) accentuates the inequalities and prevailing power relations that

[56] Retired Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Novelette Grant declared the 1996 Domestic Violence Act is "weak", after increased violence against women. http://www.jamaicaobserver.com/news/retired-dcp-says-domestic-violence-act-weak-after-women-killed_184493?profile=1373 Such criminal codes have not been codified in Jamaica despite UN's Human Rights Committee suggestion to strengthen efforts to combat gender-based violencehttps://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CCPR/Shared%20Documents/JAM/INT_CCPR_CSS_JAM_25472_E.pdf

govern how men interact with Indo and African Caribbean women. She notes that differences between African and Indian Caribbean women were both constructed and real as "it served to maintain cultural spaces through which men could maintain control over 'their' women and also alternate their behaviors towards women of different groups according to ethnic stereotypes" (Reddock, 2007). I argue that paying attention to gendered 'difference' is a way of challenging the issue of identity politics and its exclusionary, violent and conflictual potential that is characteristic of the masculinity in spaces like Downtown.

The Jamaican state achieved hegemony through the fallacy of 'democracy' and has used it as an instrument to control human rights and justice of poor Jamaicans; particularly those living in garrison/ghetto communities, through elusive election strategies that purport to represent the interest of the people (Tafari-Ama, 2006). This produces 'die-hearted' PNP and JLP political party supporters who inadvertently choose these patriarchs to incorporate the reproduction of hegemonic and capitalist interests through a structural discourse of violence. These prevailing power relations manipulates conceptions of masculinity which make men from ghetto/garrison communities develop a reputation for violence and aggression. In turn, this enacted reputation reflects the imagery of 'real' manhood in the ghetto/garrison, an abstract form of masculinity, that is communicated verbally or through consequent violent actions.[57] This performance is "conveyed to women and affects their lives and perception" (Tafari-Ama, 2006:56). Coolz, a 28-year-old woman, previously lived with her boyfriend in Denham Town is

[57] Men living in these communities who lack many of these attributes or refuse to embody performances in opposition to the hegemonic heteronormative frame are subordinated. Additionally, any person who displays a 'feminine' persona is subjected to gender subordination. These bodies are generally vulnerable to domestic and social violence and sexual abuse.

now living in a shed downtown. She has been a silent victim of rape and domestic abuse since her teenage years. She explains:

> *Well, being terrified, police and them people was the furthest from my mind. The only thing that was on my mind was getting away from the persons who were trying to hurt me … I was even in a girls' home because my brother in-law raped me. My baby father was the last one. When I decided to stop sleep with him because I know he was out there messing with other girls. He hit me in my mouth, I lost a tooth up to today my mouth don't heal good, and him try kick my baby, the one you see there, she, out of my belly. I slept on top of a deep fridge that night and that was then I decided to leave. Him throw out my clothes in the market and disgrace me. I had nowhere to go and I ended up staying with another man but that relationship never work out… Despite my adversities I am a Strong Black woman.*
>
> (Coolz, July 23, 2019)

Feminist scholarship on masculinity is necessary because of the need to explore and understand the multiple subjectivities of Caribbean women in relation to their traditional interpretations (Barriteau, 2001:73). Black heterosexual sexual prowess has become an indicative characteristic of Black masculinity in downtown and is being actualized through gender-based violence. Therefore, masculine performativity will likewise affect feminine performativity. Connell (1987) posits that one form of femininity is defined around complicity, where women's subordination is positioned to accommodate the interest and desires of men – "emphasized femininity" – and others are defined from a complex combination of complicity, resistance, and cooperation (185). Here, emphasized femininity equates to codes of respectability; an identity some higglers embody and a characteristic of Black womanhood that both empowers and oppresses. Alternately, Connells (1985) complex combinations of femininity, will be presented as 'complexed femininity' in this study to describe the intricacy of femininity in Jamaica that aligns with notions of reputation.

Black women, through socialization, have learned emphasized femininity either by; enduring or ignoring abuse, men having multiple sexual partners or in deciding to take care of their children without expecting consistent support from the fathers. Coolz's non-compliance subjected her to domestic violence because fear made her strong-willed. Additionally, Coolz's non-compliance with gender-based violence justifies Patricia Hill Collins' assertion that when a woman portrays or establishes herself as a Strong Black Woman (SBW) it "encourages Black men to become abusive towards the woman who may seem as controlling their lives" (2004:205). Moreover, single (m)otherhood, Jamaica's harsh economic climate via neoliberal capitalist globalization and the state makes it difficult for poor and/or lower working-class Black women to reject exploitation in the public domain. This led to Coolz's self-defined view as a SBW.

In fact, when I asked participants about seeking assistance through the state, many mentioned that going to Family Court is a "waste of time". Shantel, a participant, added that the process requires too much for just JMD$3000 every two weeks. Therefore, I argue that for working-class Black women and single mothers, learning to be SBW becomes an expectation and the primary reflection of the institution of Black (m)otherhood. Within this context, the SBW is able to withstand adversities and is strong-willed which is a positive characteristic of Black femininity but also a negative attribute because of the very definition of being a SBW. Internalized perceptions of emphasized femininity are also associated with the materialistic and sexualized imagery of Black women in Jamaica. Whilst waiting to recruit a participant to serve her customers this theatric scene took place:

Male Higgler 1: "yeah si di summa wear dem, dem nuh dear dem… gyal pum pum fi show… get yuh short shorts"[58]

*Male Higgler 2: "Hot draws… hot draws…" *clap* *clap* "Hot draws… hot draws…"*[59]

A few feet away standing in front his pile of jeans laying on top of a tarpaulin on the sidewalk, a female higgler was sitting next to him:

Male Higgler 3 on a microphone sung: "woman pants a $1000 and $1200… straight jeans, cheap jeans, clean jeans, new jeans, jeans in style…" A woman stops by the female higgler and male higgler 3 holds her and said "woman pants over here - $1000…". She shakes him off and starts walking away, he responds, "muma, come look nuh (woman take a look at these)"

A friend of the prospective participant uttered to me:

"A suh people tun cannibal pon yuh when yuh nuh buy from dem." [60]

Male higgler 3: "Weh di bloodclaat dah fat woman yah nuh lif up before mi (pause and stares at woman)… a true nutt'n yah suh cyah fit har…"[61]

She responds: "before yuh wah? yuh mussi wah mi tell mi pickney dem fi come string up yuh bloodclaat…mi nuh wah nutt'n from you all unno do a con people". She continued arguing. [62]

A man standing beside me said: "Browning all dem woman deh… yuh affi strong mi manage dem enuh… fi rough har up… fi beat it (vagina) up. Yuh cyah play nice wid dem woman deh…"[63]

The power drama that emerges into arguments and fights has become normalized to witnesses of these everyday performances, which are described as "street entertainment" and

58 Translation – Male Higgler 1: "Yeah I have the summer wear, they are cheap…girl pum pum (female genitalia) must show… get your short shorts

59 Translation – Male Higgler 2: "Hot panties…"

60 Translation – "You see how people turn cannibal when you don't buy from them"

61 Translation - Male higgler 3: "Why this bloodclaat fat woman don't move before mi (pause and stares at woman)… a true nothing here can fit her…

62 Translation- she responds: "before you what? You must want me to tell my children to string up your bloodclaat…I don't want nothing from you all you do a con people".

63 Translation - A man standing beside me said: "Browning all them woman there… you have to be strong to manage them you know… to rough her up… to beat it (vagina) up. You cannot play nice them woman there…

"show". The stereotypical discourse of higglers and 'Downtown' women as loud, aggressive and unfeminine do not fit middle-class ideals of femininity. In part, the celebration of Black women's bodies and how their bodies are represented and handled by men have "became increasingly replaced by the objectification of Black women's bodies as part of a commodified Black culture" (Hill Collins, 2004:128). Historically, the objectification of Black women's bodies has been a racial motive, within this context, it proves it to be a sexist one as well. This setting also demonstrates and validates that the strength of the SBW and proves that Black men may desire these women because it makes them more 'manly'; otherwise "*fi rough har up… fi beat it (female genitalia) up".* The politics of masculinity, or rather the 'crisis of masculinity', therefore is not only a personal matter of identity but also one that relates to questions of social justice and an inclination towards the 'crisis of a gender order' (Connell, 2005).

Alternately, some Black women/higglers "internalized and reproduced their own versions of violence as illustrated in their competitive encounters to secure their scarce 'commodity' of a 'man'" (Tafari-Ama, 2006:56). Karen explains:

…the father was there[at the house] but me and him break up… because him love woman and me love beat them. And because I beat the women, more time him sabotage me. Him live with me in the house and more time him and him woman them at the back of the house. Me not giving him bun so him not suppose to give me none [64]

(Karen, July 30, 2019)

Central to this discourse of power, higglers performativity of complexed femininity attempts to resolve conflicts that seep through the cracks of their larger structural problems – poverty, crime and violence, masculinity, the state and its apparatus, 'bad-mind' culture. The cultural acceptance of monogamy for the women and not for men allows men to valorize their

[64] "bun" refers to cheating or unfaithfulness

sexual prowess and phallic power. Hence, contested relations will ensue between some women because patriarchal codes of masculinity push women to secure themselves and their families by fighting the threat that is likely to deplete their scarce commodity (a man); even if it means being sabotaged.

Most higglers' appeared to be in support of the crisis of the gender order. The increased presence of men and their assertion of their masculinity in the market space have been normalized. When I asked higglers' about the increased occupation of male higglers in the space, most said "it's either they here or they pick up the gun" because some of them are unable to find work and some coming from prison others said that some are not male higglers but thieves parading the space, looking for their next victim . My curiosity piqued having observed the energy and aggression the male higglers displayed; most were young men. These factors led me to speak with a few male higglers about their increased presence in the market space. They too expressed that higglering is better than picking up a gun or thieving. They also shared that it is more than getting a "quick sale" to "guh braff".[65] They explained that they face issues of unemployment as "a ghetto youth", fulfilling patriarchal obligations – taking care of family and women – so they have to "hustle the money".[66] Higgling for some men then is a hustle or a social therapy for grappling with financial demands and the 'culture of clientelism' embedded in their communities. [67]

> *There are a few men that are dedicated to the work like dah (that) juice man deh (there), mi know him a sell juice from long time. But a few a dem man deh weh a walk with a 2 or a 3 belt or a bag, dem nah sell. Dem come fi do something different.*[68]
>
> *(Julia, July 17, 2019)*

[65] 'Braffing' is a Jamaican slang which means to celebrate/party, or show-off, or being boastful, or 'chillax' (to chill and relax)
[66] *Hustle the Money/Dollar Sign* is a song from Vybz Kartel that speaks to the hustling mentality of ghetto youths (killi killi or shattas).
[67] See Imani Tafari-Ama *Blood Bullets and Bodies* – Enculturing Political Clientelism
[68] Translation - …But a few men that walk around selling 2 or 3 belts or bags, they are not selling. They come to do something different.

I agree with Julia, there are some "good" male higglers downtown as well as other who Lexi calls "goose killers" that are hired to steal your sale or carry out acts of violence based on personal rift (Ulysse, 2007:180). Additionally, many participants said that quite a few stalls and shops were owned by men, women were just there to sell for them because "man love nuff (plenty) money!" exclaimed Juliet from the craft market. This is undeniably true as higglers complained that most men do not give favors because they have to pay for everything you ask them to do. From this we can infer that "*something different*" can also mean exploiting women, since higglering is inherently a *Woman's Domain*.[69] Coolz, for instance, describes her form of exploitation:

> *I have a cart that I rent… they build carts and rent them for $500 as a business… Male and female renting carts. The female pay people to build it and then rent it out… it is not licensed but I guess (paused) is the owner have to do that. We just rent the cart. We responsible for ourselves so we just have to be careful. I pay $500 per day so imagine I don't make nothing sometimes and I still have to pay. So, basically, it's a win some lose some… Is just the fittest of the fit survive*
>
> (Coolz, July 23, 2019)

In this regard, the social order of business, runs parallel to the *social organization of masculinities* (Connell, 2005), as the relationship between different forms of masculinity and femininity and masculinity are central to the heteropatriarchal order of business. The ideology of gender difference has been important to the construction of gender and performance of femininity and masculinity. This ultimately makes:

> *Downtown life not hard, and it is not easy. If you want something out of it, you can get it, but you have to be determined. And when you come here, what you see here let it stay here, what you hear here let it stay here, cause guess what, you can die here.*
>
> *(Wata Wata, June 24, 2019)*

[69] See Winnifred Brown-Glaude's contextualization and examination of higglering in the informal economy and why it is simply not just a woman's domain in her book *Higglers in Kingston: Women's Informal Worker in Jamaica* (pages 39 – 64).

> *You affi rough…When I jus come out here, **I was soft** and then when I realize seh is like everybody want to push mi around and dem want to tell mi what to do, **mi affi toughen up**. Sometimes **yuh affi cuss two clat** or talk some things weh yuh nuh really need fi talk or really wah seh. So yuh have fi tough up and **put people inna dem place**. [70]*
>
> (Serita, July 29, 2019)

> *yuh affi have di strong determination cah yuh have some people weh come and will tek all yuh goods an nuh pay yuh. So **yuh affi have dah likkle strongness inna yuh**.[71]*
>
> (Wes, July 9, 2019)

Serita and Wes standpoints allude to an gender order of business downtown and its complexed feminine requirement. According to Judith Butler (1990), identity can be performatively established by the expressions of gender thus higglers' resistance to their subjectivity can be constituted through the routine performance of complexed femininity. Sexualized conception of women as "soft" and men as "tough" and "strong" are historically rooted in respectable notions of gender and sex relations and its associated color, class and power status. As higglers become politically conscious of their invisibility as Black women in the public domain, they also internalize the gendered meaning of masculinity in its abstract and hegemonic form and embody practices that are not characteristically normalized as feminine. Joy Fuller, confirmed one such characteristic of complexed femininity when she implied that committing crimes correlates with being street-smart. This symbolizes an act of claiming power and earning respect from male counterparts. When I asked her what it meant to be street-smart, she responded:

> *Tiif, from yuh nah try hustle or do anything productive, yuh coming town fi learn how fi tiif. When I was a girl and had no responsibilities, me use to tiif… pick pocket, grab chain and all sort of things..a nuh likkle fight me fight and stab up and dem things there and get*

[70] You have to be rough… When I just came out here (to work), I was soft and then when I realized that everyone wanted to push me around and tell me what to do, I had to toughen up. Sometimes you have to curse and say things you don't really need or want to say. So, you have to toughen up and put people in their place.
[71] You must have strong determination, because you have some people that come and will take all your goods and not pay you. So have to have that little strongness in you

> *lock up enuh...An even when mi get lock up mi nuh go prison cause I can chat my way out of it* [72]
>
> (Joy Fuller, August 3, 2019)

Similarly, Coolz stated:

> *… I did couple robbery between 16 and 19. I am not ashamed… because what they wanted, I was not willing to give. Just like how they are planning for us, we are planning back for them (men)…*
>
> (Coolz, July 23, 2019)

Therefore, similar to how abstract masculinity contends with middle-class hegemonic masculinity in the streets, complex femininity runs parallel to emphasized femininity and is an embodied practice of resistance that contests emphasized femininity, abstract masculinity and hegemonic masculinist agenda. Hence, being street-smart were Joy Fuller's and Coolz way of representing icons of Black womanhood and a social marker of difference against notions of respectability. As a woman, this practice of being street-smart requires a combination of knowledge and skills acquired in the streets, such as being able to con men, a public domain that is inherently masculine; and technical expertise, for instance, the ability to talk your way out of trouble.

Additionally, their response shows that younger women are likely to carry out robberies. It goes to show that men prey on younger women because they think younger women are easier to control and manipulate. I argue that being street-smart is an analytic tool for navigating the downtown. Joy Fuller's use of the word *learn,* and Coolz refusal to submit men's demands reflects the internalization of 'difference' in gender relations that counters the prescribed class

[72] "Thief, from you not trying to hustle or do anything productive, you coming town to learn how to thief. When I was a little girl and had no responsibilities, I use to thief… pick pocket, grab chain and all sort of things... Is not little fight me fight and stab up and them things there and get lock up… And even when me get lock up I can't go to prison cause I can talk my way out of it."

and material role for women. In this light, complex femininity becomes a method of reputation that is characteristic of higglers identity and represents their autonomy, agency, street smartness and "toughness".

Alternately, Lucy's description of the craft traders' emphasized femininity implies the maintenance of practices of institutionalization of gender that supports the politics of respectability and patriarchy. When I asked her if she thinks craft traders should have a particular type of personality she states:

> *you have to exercise a good personality… your hospitality has to be up there… Because this is what keeps you in the business and when they (tourists) come here you want them to feel relaxed and comfortable… We get training because we are registered under The Tourist Board and we do courses that teach you how to do our business well…We are all competitive but the thing about it, we as craft traders* ***we try to live loving****. We have a disciplinary committee in here,* ***so we have to operate a certain way****. You cannot operate down here in any sort of violence because as I told you we only carter for tourists. So, we have to* ***abide by rules***
>
> (Lucy, July 16, 2019)

In Lucy's case, tourism is used to create an ideological structure that promotes commodification, bureaucracy, servility and standardized and uniform thinking. The training craft traders receive from Jamaica Tourist Board can therefore be seen as a tool for their subjectivity. Because respectability and identity politics are distinguishing features that determines which bodies occupy spaces in the Craft market, the organization of the market is based on middle-class self-interest which positions the market to align with larger neo-colonial structures in the tourism industry. Emphasized femininity is indirectly learnt and practices of complexed femininity is sanctioned by the Disciplinary Committee.

Conclusion

The politics of naming is beyond terminology or the ability to assert power and right to (re)claim a name since what is at stake is the issue of agency, subjectivity, and power – the power to name oneself, one's location and one's struggle (Nneamka, 2001:349). The demonization of the term "higgler" resulted in some higglers attempt to rename themselves and the government to rename others as 'craft traders'. Downtown spaces are not only heavily influenced by divisions and tensions governed by a "see, blind, hear and deaf" culture, but it is also organized based on various performances and characteristics of masculinities and femininities that determines survival of higglers livelihood. Outside designated government market spaces, the street, in some ways, can be seen as a sight of contestation or a site for theatrics. This not only demonstrates that Downtown spaces nurture hypersexualized identities that harass women who do not endorse hegemonic heteronormative codes of masculinity but also that masculinities Downtown are class-based.

Emphasized femininity is a learned behavior that positions women to accommodate the desires and interest of men and aligns higglers with middle-class respectability and an identity some higglers' embody. Higglers' loud, aggressive and "unfeminine" behavior reflects a complex combination of feminine performances to ensure their survival in certain spaces where gender-based violence and sexual harassment is normalized. Developing a reputational identity of complex femininity became in this context, a means to visibility since the problem of capitalist development is one of inequality and invisibility as the informal economy serves as a cradle for fueling the neoliberal patriarchal state's masculinist agenda to dominate and control. Complexed femininity thus becomes an embodied practice of resistance that higglers undertake to challenge

neoliberal-patriarchal masculinist agenda. The street can, therefore, be seen as a microcosm of the wider society, a social institution with its own laws, culture and economic based and runs parallel to state institutions.

CHAPTER THREE

Imagined Reality: Sex, Faith, and Hope for Sale

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I examined higglers (neo)colonial lived experiences inside Downtown's contemporary political economy, and how respectability and identity politcs interweave with the productive relations and the various ways higglers are impacted. More specifically, I focused on how identity and respectability politics informs gender difference and performances of femininities and masculinities. The idea of naming, the cultural and political struggles of higglers material realities disrupts the politics of positionality whicch excludes the higglers' agency. It produces a socio-political consciousness, hierarchies of difference and social meanings of higglers' based on their location. The politics of naming is embedded in systems of power, privilege, and oppression and are reproduced in the binary opposition of respectability and reputation.

Brown-Glaude (2011) claims that engendering higglers' identities justify their citizenship in the nation. [73] Her argument below on higglers as "Dirty and Dis/eased" bodies in Kingston's urban spaces expose the complex as well as subtle obstacles that may shape and confine higglers' everyday experiences. She states:

> The lived experiences of higglering reveal a complex web of power that goes beyond the informal/formal divisions…but I am convinced that these lived experiences illuminate racialized/colored, classed, and gendered contexts of inclusion and exclusion that Black

[73] Higglering is one of the oldest trades for Black women in Jamaica. The legacy of colonialism demonized the trade and has socially inscribed meanings of higglers bodies as "dirty and dis-eased" (as demonstrated in Winnifred Brown-Glaude's book *Higglers in Kingston*). Today, higglering is heavily stigmatized and higglers' are understood as societal pollutants.

> [working-class] women in Jamaica grapple with as they struggle “fi mek a sale” [to make a sale] and thereby dis-ease the everyday order (2011:163)

From this statement, it becomes clear that managing competition between the privileged and marginalized oftentimes magnify differences between structures of inequality where higglers' bodies have inevitably become a site for struggle against belonging, agency and subjectivity, domination and resistance, exclusion and marginality. Hill Collins (2000) expresses that such a complex understanding of power by describing it as both a force that some groups use to oppress others and "an intangible entity that operates throughout society and is organized in particular domains." These intricate notions of power provide tools for analyzing Black women's inequality through structural, hegemonic and interpersonal lens. Jamaica assumes liberal notions of citizenship that is dependent on, supported by and formulated around patriarchal notion of “rationalized hegemonic masculinity” (Mohanty, 2003:65) which informs gendered modes of belonging.[74]

Given downtown’s clientelist and partisan political history, systemic violence, distrust between the State and its agents and higglers’, and higglers and some Black working-class men, higglers’ had to find means to empower themselves. This source of empowerment and accountability is described in this chapter as, imagined reality. Higglers’ imagined reality is a coping mechanism or alternative pathway to their own self-definition and autonomy. In doing so, I will further examine Black woman’s sexuality in Jamaica and its connection with higglers’

[74] This rationalized masculinity is evident in the nation's structural division of labor employed by the state, in terms of male/female ratio, in government, judiciary and military. It is also evident in the type of jobs that were negotiated and is being negotiated between the government and the global North for the labor market program; such jobs are gendered in Jamaica. The cultured roles/duties and responsibilities of the sexes in the public/private becomes a decisive factor and the selection process for these jobs is based on this bureaucratic gender regime favoring males rather than females. This regime perpetuates the *Myth of the Male Breadwinner.*

"safe space", that some higglers' conceptualized as their "home". I also used frames such as sex, faith and hope as conceptualizations of higglers imagined reality. In essence, higglers imagined reality represents a space of escape for which they engage their desires with the hope of improving their families and material condition. [75] Ultimately, I argue that the embodied practices of sex, faith and hope become a survival strategy in 'ghetto traps'. Thus, Downtown is not just a business center. Downtown represents *life* for many higglers.

Conceptualizing 'home'

> *Downtown is my home. You don't inform on the members of your home…what you see here stays here because you have to remember you coming back here tomorrow.*
>
> (Wata Wata, June 24, 2019)

This captured the essence of Wata Wata response when I asked her about her experience in Coronation Market. When I asked her to define 'home' and distinguish it from your actual home? Interestingly she said:

> *When I reach home, I am so tired I just hit the locker and don't come out. I sleep until Sunday evening to come back here to my other home… sometimes my kids ask when am I going to spend time with them cause they hardly see me…As a woman, you have to do what you have to do and you have to say to yourself - no man is not there. No parents not there. But you have you and you have your children. And your kids are your family and you want only the best for them…therefore, when you come here, you don't look to the left or to the right you just look steadfast and upright and tell God this [selling] is what you going to do. And it comes with difficulties because at times you are here and when you feel like you going to sell a certain amount this week, you don't sell it… so you have to know how to live and trust in God because you will be here and make nothing for yourself.*
>
> (June 24, 2019)

[75] Downtown is renowned for its violent culture. Higglers have and are learning to acclimatize themselves to this form of hegemonic masculinist misogynist culture, to the point where some have embodied such practice (demonstrated in chapter 2). Being that this culture is so normalized, and a majority of my participants viewed Downtown as a safe space, 'home' and an imagined reality has become second nature for the actualization of their goals.

Her home outside Downtown represents relaxation; and it shows the unconventional nuclear Western family structure from which her children are raised. The matriarchal family structure is not unique to Wata Wata's household, as most women in my study, with the expectation of seven participants – Gene-Marie, Lucy, Miss Pam, Maureen, Shantel, Carol and Juliet – are matriarchs or their children are being raised in matrilineal homes. It must be noted that three out of the seven are married and the others are in a common-law-relationships.[76] Living in a common-law relationship makes life a "little easier sometimes…you know… especially when it comes to paying your bills and sending my daughter to school … but it depends on the baby father that's why I said sometimes" said Shantel (June 24, 2019). Maureen asserts that "although living with a man is not easy…because as you know men give *trouble* sometimes… when it comes to bills and trying to get something through NHT, if you ready to take that step, it's better" (August 3, 2019).[77] [78]

Wata Wata's "other home" – 'home' – in Coronation Market, where she sleeps three to four times per week, symbolizes hope. The relationship between 'home', imagined reality and higglers reflects an assumed cultural epistemological understanding of higglers political consciousness as a class that centers their imagined realities through embodied practices as a result of 'being home' - Wata Wata's demonstrated that her faith in God is the foundation as well as a motivator of her hope for sustaining her family and her business. 'Being home' is a social

[76] This union comprises of two people living together in a "marriage-like" relationship, usually with children, but are not married. They refer to each other as boyfriend/girlfriend, man/woman, partner or spouse and share bills and other finances.
[77] Trouble in this sense speaks to male promiscuity that is normalized in Jamaica.
[78] NHT – National Housing Trust is a government institution that builds and sells low-income houses to so-called "poor people". Additionally, they lend money at low-interest rates to contributors who wish to build, buy or repair their homes or buy or build on lots. The process of obtaining a loan reinforces the state's gendered agenda https://www.nht.gov.jm/loans/who-qualifies

marker of her acceptance of the boundaries and borders that comes with the trade. This makes 'home' both a site for survival and identity reclamation.

Similar to Shantel and Maureen Julia, mother of six who is not interested in marriage because "man a problem", stated that each child has a different father and "each [man] helps to take care of their own child". Additionally, higglering is a way to put money in her "own" pocket; it is her personal "savings" (July 17, 2019). This according to Edith Clarke's (1972) study was the typical embodiment of Black working-class women's sexuality in Jamaica - exclusively heterosexuals, autonomous of male power and may have children for multiple male partners (generally or the purpose of procreation and proof of womanhood).

Whenever a woman engages in sexual activity with multiple male partners, outside of marriage and domesticized living arrangements, they are often labeled as "whores" and "sluts". On the contrary, a woman is complicit in gendered oppression is considered a "good woman" or a "virtuous woman". Lucy, who has been married to a man for 21 years shares two sons with her husband. She states, "I have been doing and still doing my duties (wifely duties). My husband's only expectation of me is to come home cook and clean the house and make sure he is satisfied [sexually]." Gene-Marie, mother of five – each child belonging to a different man - lived a 'promiscuous' lifestyle when she was younger. She is now married and a Christian and claims that now she realizes that her previous lifestyle was "wrong". With such unfavorable sexual qualities, Jacqui Alexander (2005) argued that women's sexual agency and erotic autonomy pose challenges to the hetero-patriarchy, the nuclear family, the nation and respectability politics.

Furthermore, the contradictory use of the law by the policing state to criminalize or control working-class Black bodies that operate outside the boundaries of hetero-patriarchal rules

becomes evident when policemen are using their phallic power and uniform to "benefit from their [sex workers] service" (June: July 30, 2019).[79] She reminded me that, "this is a market you know, and people live and sleep here. So, you must expect that [sex] must happen. I see them doing it [having sex] all the time on top of the stalls…anywhere at nights". Sex work in Jamaica is illegal under Article 23 of the Sexual Offences Act (Nelson, 2015). However, the government's mainstreaming agenda intends to develop "programs to protect *commercial* sex workers from threats such as STIs, violence and harassment" (National Policy on Gender Equality, 2011:47). This suggests that although sex work is illegal in Jamaica, the government is aware of its economic influence, as part of the global *trading of the other,* in tourist spaces located mainly to the North of the island.[80] [81] Imani-Tafari Ama's participant, Mr. Malcolm from the Southside (a 'ghetto trap' inside Downtown) state that these government practices are not new. When Downtown, Kingston was the island's trading center, he explained:

> In the fifties and sixties, Central Kingston here had a lot of *whorehouses*…The whole place was *infested* because you had regular Navy ships coming here. The majority of the girls in those sport houses were girls from [rural areas]. People used to go in the country and tell the young girls that they were going to give them a barmaid job. Then they would bring them here and get them into that way of life.
>
> (Tafari-Ama, 2006:311)

This reinforces Kempado (2005) argument that sexuality in the Caribbean has been and continues to be an essential economic resource in the face of inequal global trading in region. Considering this and the frequency of sexualized images of Black bodies on the media (print and

[79] To contextualize this quote, none of my participants are sex workers, however, sex workers are a part of their community and thus became a part of my conversation with a few higglers.

[80] See: Nelson, J. (2015, March 26). *Time to Decriminalize Prostitution* - http://jamaica-gleaner.com/article/commentary/20150326/time-decriminalize-prostitution

[81] See: Weigel, H. (2017, February 16). *Jamaican Sex Workers Live Interviews Plus Phone Calls* - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jJJvwJJJK5Y

broadcast) and the popularity of paternity testing, it becomes evident that "the white imagination still traffics in toxic racial and gender stereotypes" (Guy Sheftall, 2003). Additionally, the national perception of higglers as "unfeminine" "vulgar" and "lawless" misinforms Black men and how they should treat Black working-class women. In other words, "gentility and respectability" are generally exclusively reserved for middle-class women, since the cultural perception of the lower Black working-class woman is one where she lacks such 'feminine characteristics' as a result of her 'toughness' and being the cultural epitome of a Strong Black Woman (SBW). This justifies higglers embodiment of complexed femininity. In any case, as a Black working-class woman, putting your erotic/economic autonomy before (m)otherhood signifies that you are a "bad mother" or a "monster" because in Jamaica (m)otherhood is synonymous to woman*hood*. Coolz state:

> *Prostitution is a popular business among the younger generation down here. Prostitution is life for some of these young girls because no one is there to help them and they have kids to feed… They explain their life to me and sometimes they cry because they buck up on some men that are hoggish and crabbit (rough and aggressive) ... My friend is a monster right now…she is a bad mother. She put prostitution before her kids…she did it until she became a monster… is only the Lord who can save her.*
>
> (July 23, 2019)

Black working-class women have been exposed to some of the most hurtful lived experiences. The economic commodification, criminalization, marginalization and objectification of Black working-class women are grounded in the pathologization of Black sexuality to affirm Black hetero-patriarchy, sexism and classism. The market, as June pointed out, is a site of resistance and sometimes rebellion, where some higglers "rent their bodies" as an additional way of survival. Furthermore, Tafari-Ama asserts:

> Jamaican ghetto women who supposedly "sell pussy", are not really selling pum pum. They are renting, or sometimes leasing it. They are not actually selling their bodies, as in giving them away. Rather, they are hiring out their bodily assets repeatedly for short, temporary periods of time, thus empowering themselves by maintain control and ownership of their most precious commodity, their physical assets.
>
> (Blood Bullets and Bodies, 2006:315)

Sex for material goods is a way of escaping "gendered and sexual regimes that privilege masculine heterosexual needs and desires and actively work against dominant ideologies and practices that seek to deny their existence" (Kempadoo, 2004:4). Coolz reference to "prostitution as life to young girls" suggests that women and girls are willfully renting/leasing their bodies to middle-class or working-class men or women who are willing and able to match the price for their valuable commodity. Although, sometimes sex work is "insufficient to transform the entrenched structures that caused them to be in such desperate circumstances in the first place" (Tafari-Ama, 2006:312). In this instance location becomes central as sex and sexuality for and with Black working-class residing in ghetto/garrison areas are different from sex and sexuality for Black working-class located in tourist towns. Simply because "sex in the tourist world involves escapism of one form or another and with tourists as one involves escapism and the other… [in the inner-city it] ensures temporary survival in the vicious ghetto trap from which buyers or sellers escape" (Tafari-Ama, 2006:24).

Sexual politics in Jamaica have been used to maintain class boundaries. Colonial racialized gender ideology has framed and shaped the beliefs about Black masculine and Black feminine sexual politics. Connecting hegemonic power and class to demonstrate the otherization of working-class Black women is based on racialized gendered objectification. Black working-class women's experiences go beyond the boundaries of economic oppression by economic

forces and capital wealth but extend to conflicts between gender inequality and Black women's sexuality.

Kempadoo (2004), centralizes sex, sexuality and Otherness, colonial constructions of gender and sexual life, for positioning and defining hetero-patriarchy. Sex and sexuality have long been a "silenced" subject in the Caribbean given the region's established hegemonic belief in heteronormativity, rooted in its colonial civilizing mission, and reinforced by Christian religious fundamentalism. Colonialism and Christianity informed gender roles and hierarchies and became the yardstick through which legislations were created to criminalize and exclude gender identities and sexuality outside the "normative". In this light, concepts of white supremacy, hetero-patriarchy, capitalist class, and masculinity all assume hegemonic social positions that aligns with capital accumulation and institutionalized systems of power. Higglers' imagined reality represents a "safe space" where they engage, adapt, define, contest or resist masculinist, respectability and identity politics in order to keep their hope and faith alive.

Gene-Marie emphasized [Black] women are keeping the economy afloat and she has never worked in the formal sector (June 26, 2019). Similarly, Serita said, "I don't see myself working for anybody again. I used to do domestic work and work in wholesale. If you reach 5 or 30 minutes late, they tell you that they are going to shorten your pay…If you get sick you have to take a prescription to show them… I used to work for a "upper-class man" up Jacks Hills… I looked after his mother… and when she wants me "Black bitch… Fat gyal (girl) come clean me!" That is how she use to address me" (July 27, 2019). Carol had this to say:

> *After leaving school I started working with a lady in May Pen and how she abused me. She made me clean her house first and then her restaurant. Anything she wants in May Pen town, I had to way to get it and she has a car. Not even a taxi. Plus, she didn't pay me on time. I said might as well I go to the market with my mother, because I would have nobody to boss me around, so I just packed my bag and leave.*
>
> (July 1, 2019)

Marsha explains:

> *We are the problem man. Do you understand? And the way some of them [policemen] treat us because we sell in the market like we are not civilized…They might be making more money than me but them nuh more than me [but they are not better than me]*
>
> (July 17, 2019)

This represents how higglers' imagined reality can be infiltrated by the cultural patriarchal exploitation and negatively, though temporarily, displace higglers' in the informal economy. One primary manifestation of this, is how higglers' use negative encounters as stepping-stones rather than hinderances.

Using several interview transcriptions from my fieldwork, I extracted common responses to create this poem. Centering higglers' voices through poetry, highlight imageries, of pain, desire and resistance. The poem *Mi Love Sell!* captures the political struggles of higglers' material reality and presents narratives of their experiences as Black lower working-class women at 'home' as an imagined reality. Poetry according to Audre Lorde represents "the quality of light by which we scrutinize our lives has a direct bearing upon the product which we live, and upon the changes which we hope to bring about through those lives" (1984:37). All my participants expressed their love for selling despite the gendered oppression they face Downtown that sometimes temporarily displaces higglers' imagined reality.

Mi Love Sell!

I am a single mother
I never had a choice
I have to go out there and do something to survive
I love selling

Mi love sell!
it teaches Me to be independent and how to save a dollar and make it stretch
it built My house
it pays My bills
it is My pension
it bought My van
it sends My kids to school
I love selling

Mi love sell!
You think it easy?
town is not a nice place
between, government, police, gunman, and thief… ZOSO
ignored…draped up…abused… stolen goods…corruption…politics…promises… mama!
them don't care about Us around here
it's like we not civilized
I love selling

Mi love sell!
it rough
I don't want my children push-cart like Me, I don't want them to experience this
sometimes out here come in like a movie, sex in the market….man shooting man
people will walk over you, you have to be tough
I just pray and ask God to see Me through
I learn to see, blind, hear and deaf
I love selling

Mi love sell!
this is what I'm doing till I die
I don't plan to stay here forever…
I going to open a store… bakery…a center for battered women
I love selling

Selling Faith as Hope

Higglers embody the street code "see, blind, hear and deaf" – silence – to survive the multiple levels of oppression they encounter. Silence generates a double consciousness that oftentimes translates to faith. This consciousness is one in which Black working-class women "become familiar with the language and manners of the oppressor, [and adopts] them for some illusion of protection" (Lorde, 1984:114) from their harsh economic reality. As Hill Collins (2000) argues that while domination is inevitable within safe spaces, "it is unlikely to be hegemonic within a social space where Black women speak freely" (100). Therefore 'home,' becomes the place where faith is nurtured. Hence, silence ought not to always be understood as a submission but can rather be interpreted as faith. Season Woman summarizes the energy needed to maintain their home:

> *I used to sell on the road like orange street before I came into this market. My boss is my ex-boyfriend. After he get lock up he started to help himself and plant things. I started to sell for him because I was not working. I told him we should do business together when we started to get a flow. We travel from town to St. Elizabeth in his truck to get melon. The truck gives a lot of problems, every minute it breaks down. It took about four months before we started getting money from the stall. And from that, he started to look the load and I sell…Although I live in Denham Town, I sleep here. Do you know how much time they rob over here? They took two saving pans and a little something you can watch the show on. They all took a chest; they thought money in there. They even stole my phone one night. Men from here do it, some of the people here and the thieves are friends that's why they don't do anything. Sometimes I see them and say "Hi! Hello! I see you!"… anyways so if we make XYZ you know it is his vehicle so he must get half and I must be satisfied with the rest because I could be at home not doing anything…Market life rough, rough, rough.. Yes, it pays but you just have to work and put your money to good use. It is not easy to sleep in the market you know because sleep is next to death and when you sleep any dice can play…So I sleep around 7 pm and wake up by 10pm and from 2am to 3am I pray to God then go back to sleep and get up by 6 am…Because when you work in an open place, you run a risk with your life you know. You just have to tell God to cover you and believe in God and trust God and say, yes Father Jesus this is what I am doing, and I am doing it for my living.*
>
> (June 25, 2019)

Historically, the market, for higglers is perceived to be a “safe” space because it represents inclusion, freedom and resistance; where freed slaves, house slaves, runaway slaves, and presently, liberated SBW conduct business. Higglers are generally known to be assertive and confident speakers and while coding my data it immediately became clear *when* they choose to speak/perform was evident. Season Woman's story emphasizes the fact that higglers' lives also comes with a series of negotiations that aim to reconcile the contradictions dividing how they perceive themselves against society’s perception of them as Black working-class women. The struggle of living a double life creates challenges in the construction of their ‘home’ in Downtown and contributes to the divisive nature among them. Hence, faith and hope become a requirement for success in the business, otherwise, Black working-class woman*hood* remains derogated under Jamaica’s hetero-patriarchal gender stereotypical regime.

When asked about the development of the space, Scooby, like all my participants spoke of the physical development of downtown. She explained:

> *We are all Black people but the Black people uptown and the Black people downtown it’s like we live in two different worlds. Look at that (garbage), you think you would see that uptown or even Papine market at this time of the day? Better yet, take a walk around on Duke Street. Me sure you not seeing piles garbage. I am tired of cursing KSAC about this problem… they need to create a space for us where people can find us easily*
>
> (July 30, 2019)

Beyond the physical development of Downtown, she continues her argument:

> *The government doesn't treat uptown so… even the newspaper uptown and downtown get featured differently… uptown people get featured in The Gleaner Outlook Magazine and we get Star. It is not all ghetto people love dancehall and guh (go to) party… I love gospel and I go to church. You think is little prayer I pray. Sometimes when the time is slow I ask her (point to higgler beside her) to watch my goods and walk go up to Big Tree. It is not all ghetto people walk the road naked… so we can get featured in Outlook to (too). They must stop treating us like we not a part of Jamaica to. A wah? Wi nuh Jamaicans? (What*

is it? Aren't we Jamaicans too?) That is the development I want to see. Its time the government start to treat poor people better and look out for poor people

(July 30, 2019)

It was evident that Scooby understood how space and place give Black lives and Blackness meaning across class boundaries in Jamaica. These signifiers of citizenship highlight how cultural differences are embodied, mediated, manipulated and celebrated and their implication on how higglers experience Blackness and gender. “The deflection to higglers and dancehall culture emphasizes the idea of them [higglers] generally being vulgar, lawless and the need for them to be contained. This parallels conversations about working-class Black culture as a ‘problem’” (Ulysee, 2007). It also reveals that in Jamaica, respectability shape and confine 'feminine' behaviors. In other words, femininity embodied by the Black middle class restricts her from wearing clothes that expose or cause her to flaunt her sexuality in the public. Cultural ‘difference’ articulates how, residues from the neocolonial landscape, Black woman*hood* is constructed across “uptown”/” downtown” borders. With this socio-cultural understanding that the Black working-class needs to be "tamed” and “domesticated”, coupled with the nation's Christian moral structure, so-called preachers Downtown use this opportunity to capitalize on Black working-class women's religious faith.

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen (Hebrews 11:1). Surprisingly, this scripture came to mind as I walked past the church sermon at the Big Tree today.

Preacher: *The Lord is my light and my salvation of whom shall I fear*
The Lord is the strength of my life of whom shall I be afraid…
Amen Brothers and Sisters

Congregation: Amen

Preacher: **Prays**

Congregation: Amen

Preacher: There is a shifting this morning…Will not prosper; The assignment of the enemy… Will not prosper… I declare a stumbling…I declare a falling… There is a falling away… in the Mighty Name of JESUS CHRIST….You will stand in the confidence of God…You will not be afraid of the darkness that is set up against you…

At the end of all of that he asks for money and the people giving him. If he is doing "God's" work why ask for money? Where is his faith? On top of that, all I see were hopeless faces in these public spaces. Ironically, its Independence weekend… smh (shakes my head)

"Jamaica, no problem man" If only they knew.

(Journal Entry, Aug. 2, 2019)

Over the last six decades, in Jamaica's changing political economy, the Black working-class, particular women, have been in living in survival mode. One thing remained constant is a hegemonic hetero-patriarchal capitalist economy where the "means of production was deemed a natural right within discursive frameworks of [male] supremacy" (Brown-Glaude, 2011:67). This has stimulated creativity for many higglers in the marketplace, a woman's domain, that has paradoxically, treated her like the invisible Other. Historically the marketplace has been used as a place for networking and some higglers have been using it to sell faith in their everyday interaction, especially if "dem spirit tek you" (they radiate positive energy). For example, Tallis, who manages her business, although on the street side, like any formally established store with pride:[82]

Not because you Downtown you have to behave loud … I don't like it when people behave so. Business is business. So, if you come to my stall, I will tell you 'Good morning' or whatever and ask, 'what you looking?' It's just as if you were in an office, you have to attire yourself the same way. But some people different, you understand what I'm saying…but not me. If the place wasn't dusty you would see me with my handbag and

[82] She was dusting off her goods and neatly arranging them while I interviewed her.

wearing my nice slippers and whatever. I try to carry myself and approach the business differently.

Or in the form of counseling and network building:

> *life reach me - my son end up a jail… they told a lie on him and every cent made I end up paying a lawyer. My business went down… I went down to only 5 suits of clothing and then I came back up again and one of my sons died from a motor vehicle accident. God bless me and I go America … Forever 21 straight I sell …it's a blessing. God do so much for me… He brought me from so far… I always tell people about this story. Especially when I hear them talking 'bout giving up. Right now, I'm proud of myself, from where I'm coming from.*
>
> *(Maureen, August 3, 2019)*

> *Look here I always tell people this, especially the new vendors, once you working Downtown, you have to make up your mind and tell yourself that because Downtown not nice and the people some of them are demons…just stay in your lane and keep your circle small. Yes man, once 'mi spirit tek yuh' I will help yo out*
>
> *(Gene-Marie, June 26, 2019)*

I argue, that 'home' is a site where higglers construct and reflect on their dialectic nature of the various oppressive systems and faith and sex are structures higglers' formulate to resist exploitation, criminalization and objectification.

Conclusion

Black working-class women have been profoundly capitalized in and have participated in the acknowledgment and struggle against their gendered, sexual and classed oppression. This becomes very crucial as it is through the embodiment of complexed femininity and the use of structures like faith and sex for the hope of an imagined reality, that higglers' use to resist the structural *rape* that the Jamaican heteropatriarchal culture nurtures. I close this chapter with the same quote I opened with:

> The lived experiences of higglering reveal a complex web of power that goes beyond the informal/formal divisions…but I am convinced that these lived experiences illuminate racialized/colored, classed, and gendered contexts of inclusion and exclusion that

[working-class] Black women in Jamaica grapple with as they struggle “fi mek a sale” [to make a sale] and thereby dis-ease the everyday order (Brown-Glaude, 2011:163)

CONCLUSION

Throughout this thesis, I have maintained and demonstrated the unequal and exploitative relationship between Black women, Black men and the Jamaican State (which tortuously includes neo-imperialists from the North). I problematized the hegemonic masculinist paradigm, whose misogynistic genealogy is strongly tied to the dominant structures of power, privilege and oppression. This growing misogyny has become more pronounced in the Jamaican society and is being masked with statistics and a sort of normalized colonial gendered coded culture that subtly derogate Black women, particularly Black working-class women. It is reflected in how Black women are classed in public spaces by Black men, Black women and the State and the subtle sexist and violent comments that are naturalized in our culture. These masked sentiments materialized from historical events such as slavery, colonialism and imperialism.

They confine the Black Jamaican woman into inferiorly classed and gendered borders that should be unnatural; that is violent; and that marginally positions Black women to the hetero-patriarchal hegemonic neo-colonial neo-imperial discourses that perpetuate the misogynist colonial logic. This colonial legacy has been inscribed into the national consciousness and is legitimatized in policies, laws, and ideologies that justify hetero-patriarchy. My analyses explained specific ways in which centering higglers lived experiences within an understanding epistemic violence and hierarchal gendered systems privileges male supremacy and enabled my exploration of how higglers were being impacted by these gendered, classed, colored and sexualized systems of oppression. This also provided the opportunity to examine how higglers navigate the street analogous to how neoliberal restructuring repositions ‘home’, communities and the marketplace. The street therefore must not simply be seen as visible space but as a hegemonic institution and a source of knowledge production.

Chapter one illustrated how color, class, gender and sexuality frame Black working-class women's simultaneity of oppression across hegemonic structures and institutions. The chapter also touches on and questions the Caribbean feminist/womanist agenda, particularly in Jamaica that is seemingly guided by bureaucracy. Additionally, it contextualized the relationship between classism, sexism and the socio-cultural mechanisms of male supremacy discourse. Chapters two and three provided accounts of how higglers the informal economy serves heteropatriarchal self-interest and higglers oppositional consciousness of gendered 'difference'. The chapters not only examined the Jamaican government's commitment to their masculinist agenda (in its hegemonic and abstract forms), classism, sexism and gender, it also highlighted how masculinist exclusionary practices mark the uneven systems of citizenship, gender power relations and social justice. The evidence these chapters underscored the many ways in which higglers are politically marginal subjects, within the institutionalized political economy of Downtown. In light of this, when I reflect on higglers' lived experiences and the objectification of their economic, political and social realities, it became clear that power and resistance are discourses I intend to further pursue.

My study points to how the complexity of higglers' lives Downtown frames Black lower working-class women's experience of being "Othered". Recognizing the works of other Black and women of color feminist epistemologies, *Voices of the (In)visible* response to and builds on Black women's stories of pain, hope, and desires that have taken place and continues to take place in capitalist patriarchal political economy's like Jamaica's. I am very aware that my work may not change the harsh realities of Black women in Jamaica, nor will it change the structural hegemonic socio-political policies and practices that marginalizes them in the public/private domain. However, I am confident that the decolonizing theoretical and methodological

framework that emerged from this project will guide my own and other Black feminist praxis for exposing such socially constructed ideologies. Additionally, it will advance and or stimulate organic conversations among Black and Caribbean feminist/womanist and its allies across borders about the need for coalition building and solidarity among Black women in Jamaica, and in the region to demolish capitalist patriarchal and its underlying hegemonic masculinist regimes.

Voices of the (In)Visible: A Gendered Study on Higglers In Downtown Kingston, Jamaica, therefore, bridges the different socio-political boundaries and gender power relations within Downtown. I suggest that my readers reconceptualize the dominant identity associated with higglers as “loud”, “lawless”, and “unfeminine” and acknowledge (neo)colonial discourses that have informed and continue to inform higglers, as Black working-class women, everyday lives. I hope to pursue further work that addresses the following questions: How "safe" are higglers ‘home’? What are the possibilities of revamping a radical feminist/women’s movement to empower Black women’s lives in Jamaica?

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