May 2020

Wrapped in Labels: An Examination of Black Women and the Politics of the Body in Kingston, Jamaica

Chivonne Munroe
Syracuse University

Abstract

Through a framework combining historical materialism and transnational Black feminist epistemologies, this study examines how working-class and poor Black women in Kingston, Jamaica negotiate, make meaning, and respond to the label of the Skettel and the tensions that arise in this process. The Skettel is defined as a woman who is perceived as having questionable morals, a characteristic measured against middle-class respectability. Respectability, as it relates to women, privilege a conceptualization that maintains that body language, sexuality, dress codes, and verbal communication should follow European conventions. As such, the Skettel stands as the antithesis of European notions of respectability in general, and respectable womanhood specifically. These ideologies facilitate control and promote the exclusionary politics often prescribed to working-class Black women's bodies without acknowledging the sites of struggle that these women engage with within a capitalist patriarchal society. Therefore, it is essential to understand the lived experiences of these women as well as deconstruct how labels such as the Skettel are racialized, gendered, and class-defined, influenced by notions of respectability and reproduced through socialization.

Wrapped in Labels: An Examination of Black Women and the Politics of the Body in Kingston, Jamaica

by

Chivonne J. Munroe

B.Sc., University of the West Indies, 2019

Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in Pan African Studies.

Syracuse University

May 2020

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to everyone who helped and encouraged me in this process. To the women I interviewed, to my family, to my thesis committee, to my professors, to my friends. Thank you for the solidarity that you have given me.

Acknowledgments

I want to thank the following people for their support and dedication during the process of writing this thesis and throughout my graduate studies. I am grateful to my advisor and thesis chair Dr. Linda Carty for her support, mentorship, and guidance during my graduate career and in completing this thesis. Thank you for challenging me to rethink how I understand this capitalist patriarchal society, how it is racialized and gendered, and my actions in it. Thank you for helping me understand that silence will get us nowhere and that it is through critical consciousness, radical beliefs and actions and forming a critical mass that change can be affected. Your critical feedback, challenging me to think critically about my ideas and arguments, and your willingness to help have been much appreciated. I want to thank my committee members, Dr. Himika Bhattacharya, Dr. Susan Thomas, and Dr. Gwendolyn Pough. I will be forever grateful for your amazing support and advice. To the Department of African American Studies, thank you for providing a space that has allowed me to reimagine what community looks like.

I would also like to thank my family and friends. To my mother, thank you for your unwavering support and encouraging words up to this day in my life. To say that I would have gotten this far without you would be a great disservice to what you mean to me. Thank you for listening to me talk about my work and your vested interest in following me through it. To my brother, thank you for your never-ceasing support and for being a constant source of laughter. To my father, thank you, for I know that you are always with me. To my friends who became sisters, thank you for the solidarity that you have given me throughout the years. I appreciate you all.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

INTRODUCTION

The Setting: Locating the Position of Black Women in Jamaica

Introduction

From our earliest childhood years, Black women in Jamaica encounter several ideologies and perceptions about our bodies and identities. Black women's bodies are marked by systemic, structural, and cultural discourses that limit the fundamental rights of women, particularly women from poor working-class backgrounds. As a patriarchal society, there are a set of beliefs and systems that are present in the country that highlight the determination of men to control women's bodies and their very existence. These systems and structures are based on and have contributed to global narratives that position Black women's bodies as inferior as well as deviant. Central to these narratives is the notion of respectability as conceptualized by Eurocentric beliefs that are used as a measure of moral correctness. When Black women do not adhere to the expected "moral standards," then they risk being labeled negatively by dominant members of society. One such label that has followed Black working-class women in Jamaica is that of Skettel. The Skettel[1] is conceptualized through a lens of Eurocentric morality and defines a woman with [perceived][2] questionable morals and, as a label, becomes pejorative.

As an adolescent in Jamaica, I attended an all-girls high school in the rural area. While attending this institution, it was a part of the school's behavioral code to present myself as socially and morally respectable. This ideological framework meant that my speech, dress, and physical appearance were always policed by schoolteachers and administrators to follow European-like norms. While I do not dispute the fact that some of the experiences that I

[1] In Jamaica, some Black women's bodies have been "othered" using labels such as the Sketel/Skettel, a term that is used to describe or define a woman with perceived questionable morals/ "no class"/ lascivious or one with multiple sexual partners (Kempadoo 2004; Tafari-Ama 2017).

[2] Common definitions of the label of the Skettel state that this woman has questionable morals. However, throughout this thesis, I have employed the term 'perceived' in front of this definition as the attachment of the label to this woman comes from a subjective place.

encountered in my high school were indeed invaluable, it was not until I started my graduate academic journey that I started to question how women in Jamaica are socialized to becoming "decent" and "respectable" beings. Within a country whose context is heavily defined by racialized historical ideologies, respectable bodies tend to abide by Eurocentric definitions that privilege middle-class identities. This Eurocentric middle-class identity holds that the behaviors of middle-class whites are privileged, whereas anything Black becomes sexualized and marked as immoral. In the Jamaican context, women of African descent, particularly those from lower-income households, are those whom the dominant society places the most pressure on to attain a middle-class identity even while they exploit and objectify them based on their perceived otherness.

In order to understand how Black women in Kingston, Jamaica, negotiate and make meaning of the label of the Skettel, I must first contextualize my research project. To do this, it is vital to consider the political and economic environment of Jamaica as behaviors, whether "acceptable" or not, are also tied to material conditions. The status of women in Jamaica can be examined through deconstructing the sociopolitical and economic structures of the country and the ideologies embedded in them. Against this background, it is without hesitation that I say that the Jamaican society is highly stratified based on differences in race/color, class, and gender. These were tenets used in the colonial period to determine how material conditions were produced and distributed in the country. While this level of stratification is not heavily advertised and masqueraded with the national motto of *Out of Many, One People*, one look at the allocation of resources in the country, will bring this to light. It is here where we see how capitalism has marked the bodies of Black women in the country.

Capitalism is a system of exploitation and power that has different results for different people. In dominant patriarchal discourses, it is usually articulated as economics without a human face (L.Carty, personal communication, 2019), a deliberate act to masquerade the injustice and inequality that is present within this system. Capitalism is powered by racialized, gendered, and class-defined ideologies and form a distinct system (Eisenstein 2004). It exists as a sociopolitical and economic entity that penetrates global boundaries to extract capital from resource filled societies at the expense of the masses, while the capitalist class benefits immensely. Capitalism disrupts political, social, and economic democracy. It is used as a sociopolitical and economic apparatus that intentionally structures the economies of countries in favor of capitalist agendas and, in turn, exploits and subjugates the populations of societies and further strengthens neocolonialism. The dominant ideologies that exist within the Jamaican society stem from this system and, in turn, have created physical and psychosocial communities that are maintained by normalized moral codes that dictate how members of the society, particularly women, should behave and their position within this system. It is a result of these ideologies that racialized and gendered stereotypes or labels emerge that are used as continuous methods of social control and exclusion to facilitate capitalist desires. I, therefore, utilize this framework to examine working-class and poor Black women's lived experiences in Kingston, primarily through a gendered focal point, on how Black women who have been labeled as Skettels make-meaning of the label and negotiate their responses to it.

Kingston is the capital city of Jamaica. This is important to note because the city exists as a primary site that shows the interactions of and exchanges between local and global systems (Tafari-Ama 2017). In Kingston, working-class and poor Black women have been exposed to various experiences because of these capitalist systems, which have, in turn, influenced how they

negotiate their relationships with systems, structures, and other people. This is because for capitalism to function, it requires the subjugation of Black people, particularly Black women, to keep the hierarchical structure that it creates from falling on itself. Therefore, understanding the experiences that Black women have had in relation to these power structures in the country is a necessary step to understand the complexity of Black women's lived experiences and the actions that we engage in. It is imperative to note that these power structures are rooted in a history of disenfranchisement and objectification that have become normalized within the society. In the book *Small Garden, Bitter Weed: Struggle and Change in Jamaica*, Beckford and Witter (1982) examined the socio-political and economic system of Jamaica. With a political economy theoretical framework grounded in historical materialism, their work examined how colonialism, through the system of slavery, restructured Jamaican society to fit a European social, political and economic model that resulted in the underdevelopment of the country (Beckford & Witter 1982). Central to colonialism and the progression of capitalism was the creation of a class-defined society (Deere & Antrobus 1990) that ensured the gain of economic and political power for the capitalist class. However, while development was primary for the capitalist state, underdevelopment was the result for those who were exploited (Jalée 1977; Beckford & Witter 1982; Green 2006), and as a result of these systems and ideologies, class struggle persisted.

In the post-emancipatory period of Jamaica, the class formations that existed included: the Jamaican peasantry, a "mulatto middle class," merchants, and the "white European plantocracy" (Beckford & Witter 1982:44-47). The Jamaican peasantry consisted of former African slaves and those who were their descendants. Members of the mulatto middle class included those of the population who were from a mixed parentage, specifically those of Black and white parentage (Beckford & Witter 1982; Green 2006). This group was also called the petit

bourgeois in the country and acted as a social and political buffer between the two major classes on the island (Beckford & Witter 1982). Beckford and Witter argued that when it came to the petit-bourgeois, their "social existence dictated a petit-bourgeois consciousness, with interests partly tied up with the capitalist planters and partly with the peasant and proletarian masses" (1982:45). Followed by the mulatto/brown middle class, were the members of the white European plantocracy. This group consisted of white Europeans who controlled the economic and political resources of the country. These social classes further became known as the working class, the middle class, and the ruling class. The ruling/upper class consisted/consists of foreign and Jamaican capitalists such as the Jews, Lebanese, Chinese, and white Jamaicans (Beckford &Witter 1982). These were/are the owners of the means of production and oversaw/oversee state administration and were/are deemed as "socially white" because of how they were/are positioned in the social hierarchy (Beckford & Witter 1982:47).

This class struggle was widespread throughout the island. Although Jamaica gained national independence in 1962, the creation of a political and economic system to support the entire country has proven elusive as capitalist ideologies remain in the country. As such, the Jamaican economy today is a result of these and other forms of exploitation both by international and local entities that have situated the masses of the country in a state of inequality and have reproduced social hierarchies and class conflict. With the economic crises that have affected Jamaica, women have been the most affected, with this being most evident in working-class/low-income families which too, are often headed by women (Deere & Antrobus 1990). In an October 2019 demographic report provided by the Statistical Institute of Jamaica[3], with a labor force consisting of 1,345,100 persons at the time, approximately 53, 400 women who are considered as

[3] See Appendix for tables with data from the Statistical Institute of Jamaica. Data for each table was retrieved from the Statistical Institute of Jamaica using 2019 population data.

a part of the labor force were unemployed compared to approximately 43, 300 males. In this same report, approximately 443, 500 women were found outside of the labor force, while 298, 000 men are outside the labor force. This has been a general trend in the country that women are often the ones who are the most affected (negatively) by economic and sociopolitical actions.

In the contemporary construction of the country, economic, social, and political power are usually controlled and maintained by persons who represent social whiteness but also inherent in the usurpation of power, are patriarchal ideologies such that the political economy is controlled by and in favor of patriarchal entities. For example, when it comes to the employment of women in the country, the Statistical Institute of Jamaica (2019) reported that many women in the country are employed primarily in occupations such as clerks, "professionals," technicians, and in the hotels and restaurant services industry. What is also important to note is that the unemployment rate of women in the country as of October 2019 is 8.6 percent while the unemployment rate of men is 6.0 percent. Therefore, though the country presents itself as a progressive country that values the presence of women, inherent in the construction of the country is a patriarchal value system that not only emphasizes masculinity and masculine ideologies but also reproduces how women are valued within the political economy. This results in a system where women, mainly working-class and poor Black women, are at the bottom of the social hierarchy such that "female access to power is curtailed by widespread cultural values that serve to keep them in places of subordination" (Tafari-Ama 2017:256). Therefore, it must be noted that even while dominant narratives maintain that the country is in a post-colonial period, like other countries of the Caribbean, the Jamaican society is very much in a neo-colonial state where the country is still controlled by and in favor of Western hegemonic socio-political,

economic and patriarchal ideologies and systems where racial, class and gender hierarchies are still maintained.

It is along these lines then that it becomes significant to use a gendered lens to examine Jamaica's racialized and classed systems and how these systems adversely affect Black women's lived experiences. It is here where much like other women in the Pan African community, Jamaican working-class and poor women have faced multiple forms of discrimination and injustice through avenues that connect the social locations of race, gender, class, and sexuality. However, this conversation did not start in this present moment but rather through the historical devaluing and commodification of the Black body, more specifically, the Black female body (Collins 2000) based on European racialized justification of Black inferiority.

Like other Pan African communities, historically, gender was a primary factor utilized in the exploitation of the Jamaican society. In this system, women of African descent were exploited, commodified, and used to fuel the country's capitalist system. Capitalism and patriarchy work simultaneously and employ a system where Black women are hypersexualized, treated as inferior, and viewed as property. Within this framework, gender roles are prescribed where men are given privileged positions. In contrast, women are relegated to menial ones such that women's labor is exploited and treated as less than equal or secondary to men in the country (Deere & Antrobus 1990). Not only does this formulation describe how Black women are positioned in the Jamaican economic system, but it is also linked to how the Black female body is recognized as a physical and social being. Furthermore, it describes how Black women's bodies are policed in such a manner that anything that deviates from the prescribed and supported roles that have been predetermined by heteropatriarchal discourses, is stigmatized and additionally placed in the category of the Other.

Now one of the significant ways in which the Black female body is policed in Jamaica is limiting the ability of the Black woman to express the social and sexual self without public condemnation. The Black woman's physical, sexual, and social body is often misrepresented to fit the stereotypical discourses of Black womanhood (Collins 2000; Harris-Perry 2011). In this process of constructing the normalized discourse of Black womanhood, Black women have been assigned stereotypes and labels that are used by dominant discourses as the Black female identity (Collins 2000; Harris-Perry 2011)[4]. Historically, pejorative labels and stereotypes such as Mammy, Jezebel, and Sapphire[5] were assigned and used to justify Black women's position in society and has been the benchmark of the global capitalist framing of Black women's bodies. This global capitalist framing that positions Black women's bodies as the "other" is important to unpack as this belief emerges in different ways in institutions such as the home, employment sectors, the streets, and even cultural forms.

In *Sound Clash: Jamaican Dancehall Culture at Large*, Carolyn Cooper argues that in Jamaica, "The body of a woman, in particular, is the site of an ongoing struggle over high and low culture, respectability and riot, propriety and vulgarity" (2004:82). Cooper's (2004) argument is a key framework in my research as it provides a critical lens to examine Black women's experiences in Jamaica. Her argument that the body of a [Black] woman is the site of an ongoing struggle is important in this study because it centers the complex experiences and identities that Black women go through and have respectively, while simultaneously providing room to examine why the positions that she references are created and how they are challenged. These positions that Cooper (2004) addresses, are linked to class association and gender and are

[4] While these authors are speaking of the body politic of Black women in the US society, a similar frame exists in the Caribbean; hence these citations are relevant for this current study because this is a global capitalist framing of Black women's bodies.
[5] See Patricia Hill Collins work on controlling images in her book *Black Feminist Thought*.

often used by dominant discourse to categorize Black women in the country. Of great importance to this study, is troubling the position of *respectability* and *riot/deviance* particularly in a space where working class and poor Black women's bodies are policed to follow normalized conventions of womanhood. The literature on the conceptualization of respectability within Black communities contends that "being respectable" and engaging in respectability politics are means of "uplifting" Black communities (Higginbotham 1993; Mgadmi 2009) through inscribing notions of respectability on Black female bodies. According to Njoku and Patton, "Black women must regularly choose how they respond to the influence of stereotypes in constructing black womanhood" and "one strategy designed to rearticulate black womanhood beyond stereotypes is to engage in respectability politics" (2017:144). Respectability means adopting middle-class and European values of devotion, decency, and sexual restraint (Mgadmi, 2009). While that literature centered the American experience, respectability politics is indeed transnational and exists in other Global African communities. Within this framework, engaging in behaviors that are not deemed as respectable are considered to be signs of deviance, vulgarity, and associated with low culture. Black women from working-class and poor backgrounds are often represented as hypersexual, ignorant, and immoral. Consequently, they are often the ones placed in the bracket of deviant, vulgar, and of low culture. These positions and associations are conceptualized as a threat to middle-class respectability, and as such, working-class and poor Black women who do not conform to the status quo are often excluded, exploited, or policed.

The fact is the dominant patriarchal and capitalist value systems that exist in the Jamaican society seek to control the bodies of working-class Black women but in these systems, Black women must negotiate how they participate in and respond to these systems, or as Harris-Perry (2011) calls it, these *crooked rooms*. The 'crooked room' signifies spaces, constructed from

hegemonic Eurocentric and patriarchal ideologies, where Black women exist (Harris-Perry 2011). It is important to note that within these spaces, Black women navigate and negotiate a complex ground of resisting and subscribing to the dominant narratives of their identity (Cooper 2004; Harris-Perry 2011). This theorization of a crooked room and Cooper's argument of Black women's bodies as a "site of an ongoing struggle" (2004:82) overlap and, becomes important to interrogate as they both underline the capitalist and disenfranchising aspect of the society.

With this in mind, it is essential to examine the relationship between Black women's lived experiences and practices. Examining this relationship is necessary because how working-class and poor Black women behave or negotiate their bodies, is directly related to the more complex conversation about systems and structures of power and their support and reproduction of racialized gender and classism. This examination requires identifying the relationship between power, control, the politics of respectability, and Black women and provides a basis for unpacking the conceptualization of the label of the Skettel. It is through this understanding that one can deconstruct how a label such as the Skettel operates within a country like Jamaica. Because the dominant hetero-patriarchal society of Jamaica views the Skettel as pejorative, it is through this association that women who are viewed as Skettels are excluded from participating fully within the Jamaican society and cannot get their experiences validated. In general, the use of these labels by dominant/hegemonic discourse tends to exploit and or normalize Black women's experiences and citizenship where it becomes easy to miss the connection between economic conditions, social values, and the social/physical body and Black women's employed means of survival within a heavily stratified society.

Against this background, my main argument for this study is that how working-class and poor Black women in Kingston interpret and respond to the label of the Skettel is influenced by

racialized gender and class-defined ideologies that shape their lived experiences. To evaluate this argument, my study started with the research question: *How is the constructed image of the hypersexualized Black woman, the Skettel, influenced by racialized gender and class constructs in Kingston, Jamaica?* However, while conducting my research, I learned that the label of the Skettel extends beyond the construction of the hypersexualized Black woman but also includes an attempt to define a working-class or poor Black woman in Jamaica who does not adhere to normalized codes of acceptable behaviors. As such, my research question evolved to: *How do working-class women in Kingston, Jamaica, negotiate and make meaning of the label of the Skettel?* Considering this, this study examines the ways in which working-class and poor Black women express themselves through sexuality, verbal communication, dress codes, and behavior in relation to ideologies on respectability. This study will also challenge the privileging of binary-thinking in relation to working-class Black women's lives and underscore the importance of understanding Black women's situated truths and the active struggle for self-determination in a capitalist society.

Theoretical Framework: Where Historical Materialism and Transnational Black Feminism Meet

In this thesis, I situate my work within a theoretical framework of historical materialism and transnational Black feminism. These theoretical foundations provide critical analytical tools that can be used to examine Black women's lived experiences in Jamaica. As such, in this section, I will explain in more detail my epistemological framework.

As previously stated, my theoretical framework is two-fold. Tafari-Ama (2017) provides a useful explanation that helps to explain why I chose this route specifically for this study. She states that "the subjective cultural values and psychology of individual bodies (persons) are

constructed and shaped by the social values and economic conditions that prevail in the wider society" (Tafari-Ama 2017:201). Jamaica, like many other countries of the Global South, has experienced several changes in political, social, and economic structures that have influenced societal values and economic and material conditions. Understanding the factors that contribute to the policing and labeling of Black women's bodies in the country is grounded in understanding the Black body's function in creating a capitalist system that benefits the capitalist class at the expense of all others. Against this background, deconstructing historical occurrences and their influence on objective conditions can be used to identify how historical structures, systems, and ideologies are continuously reproduced in both explicit and implicit ways and affect present society.

A historical materialist analysis is useful in examining the oppression of women in Jamaica as it provides a comprehensive method to analyze power relations inherent in gender, class, and race/color associations. The nature of historical materialism underscores that the structures and systems that are inherent in a society can be traced through history and is strongly linked to the modes of production (Beckford &Witter 1982; Hoogvelt 1997). Beckford and Witter (1982) argued that historical materialism could be used as a scientific method to illustrate the organization of the Jamaica society where past structures and systems have influenced the material conditions that are in the contemporary society. The authors stated that regarding historical materialism, "It is historical in so far as it seeks to understand the present in terms of development of its history. It is materialist in so far as it seeks the explanation of social phenomenon in underlying material causes" (Beckford & Witter 1982:9). This theoretical framework is essential in examining the tenets of my research as it provides a basis through which Jamaica's structural formations both at the macro and micro levels, respectively, can be

addressed. The exploitation and oppression of Jamaica's socio-political and economic society through colonialism has left stratifications within the society based on race/color, class, and gender, which has maintained power hierarchies that fall into the similar levels that existed in the Jamaican colonial society.

During colonialism, heteropatriarchal discourses were dominant. Therefore, not only does history continue to repeat itself, but the discourses that were inherent in the undermining and exploitation of countries of the Global South, in those same historical processes, became hegemonic in structure (Gosovic 2000). According to Gosovic, "the establishment of a hegemonic intellectual culture is one of the principal tools used by the North to dismantle and neutralize political and intellectual challenges from the South, in terms of collective action, in the field of development" (2000:2). One such hegemonic belief contends that the owners of the modes of production control society, where ownership is strongly related to racial politics. This belief was also inherent in the Jamaican colonial society and has resulted in a contemporary Jamaican society where even though most of the country consists of people of African descent, the political economy of the country is still controlled by the minority white, Jewish and Asian population. This "intellectual hegemony," as Gosovic (2000) defines it, that is perpetuated globally, becomes institutionalized, assumes the position of the dominant paradigm, and subsequently influences the lived experiences of the proletariat.

While the proletariat in Jamaica experiences various forms of oppression, women face multiple forms of oppression as a result of the different social locations that they exist within. Beale states that:

> the ideal model that is projected for a woman is to be surrounded by hypocritical homage and estranged from real work, spending idle hours primping and preening, obsessed with

> conspicuous consumption, and limiting life's function to simply a sex role…She must lead her entire life as a satellite to her mate. (1995:147)

These are just some of the general beliefs of patriarchal societies about women's role and position in society. These ideologies and the locations in which Black women are situated within influence the opportunities that Black women have access to, the prescriptive gender roles assigned, and the objectification and exploitation that are experienced by women at the hands of hegemonic patriarchal structures. These experiences all stem from internalized ideologies that privilege male and white bodies over Black women. It is through this privileging of others and simultaneous exploitation of the Other that the Black female body is continuously labeled as a social marker of difference, as a site for exploitation and oppression and often placed behind a veil.

Now let us be clear, a paradigm inclusive of historical materialism is relevant to this study as it allows one to examine the position of Black women in the country and how 'power,' often conceptualized through objective conditions, attempts to contain and control the bodies of working-class and poor Black women. Therefore, it is also through an understanding of historical materialism where one can locate how political, economic, social, and gendered labels emerge to narrate the lives of women of African descent in Jamaica. One thing that I think is particularly important to note here is the function of labels and its relationship in sustaining an intellectual hegemony that states that women of African descent are ideal sites of subordination. With this in mind, feminist theorizations will also be used in this study to map the experiences of Black women's bodies and the gendered and classed power relations that exist in these spaces to effectively examine how a label such as the Skettel becomes a part of the Jamaican discourse.

Against this background, a transnational Black feminist framework is employed to examine the complexity of the relationship between working-class Black women's lived

experiences, respectability and riot, and labels within the Jamaican context. Transnational Black feminist theoretical frameworks aim to identify and examine the experiences of Black women across borders. Within this framework, it is understood that though the context of Jamaica is relevant and valid in its physical location and historical experiences, the issues that affect Black women in the country are not isolated therefore some theorizations by Black American feminists and Caribbean feminists, can be used to analyze, or support the analysis of, women's experiences in Jamaica. This study therefore utilizes Black feminist epistemologies put forth by African American feminist scholars as well as Caribbean feminist epistemologies[6].

Now, I engage in this work through a gendered lens that acknowledges the material and ideological dimensions of gender relations. Barriteau contends that:

> the material dimension reveals how women and men gain access to or are allocated status, power and material resources in a given society…The ideological dimension indicates the ways in which a society constructs what it accepts (and contests) as the appropriate expression of masculinity and femininity. Combined they comprise gender systems that are networks of power relations. (1998:439-440)

The work of several Black feminist scholars contributes greatly to this study as they maintain the importance of the personal as the political, a standpoint that privileges acknowledging the lived experiences of Black women. Collins (2000) argues that the experiences of the everyday woman should be acknowledged and included in society and Black women should engage in a praxis of developing a feminist consciousness. Similarly, bell hooks (1992) has argued for Black women to develop a critical and feminist consciousness. She states:

[6] Caribbean feminists are understood in this research as feminists who are from, and or located within, the Caribbean that center the Caribbean experience as the basis for their studies and theoretical frameworks.

> Developing a feminist consciousness is a crucial part of the process by which one asserts radical black female subjectivity. Whether she has called herself a feminist or not, there is no radical black woman subject who has not been forced to confront and challenge sexism. If, however, that individual struggle is not connected to a larger feminist movement, then every black woman finds herself reinventing strategies to cope when we should be leaving a legacy of feminist resistance that can nourish, sustain, and guide other black women and men. (1992:57)

These positions are important as, according to Marshall (1994:111):

> The development of Black feminist standpoints transcends the limitations of sexist and racist research strategies and constitutes a form of empowerment. This is a political process because it necessarily entails a revolutionary challenge to the interface of racism, sexism, heterosexism, and class oppression in Black women's lives.

I, therefore, use the transnational Black feminist approach to pay close attention to the differences in social, political, and economic relationships that exist in society which I argue is a deliberate effort to gain analytical clarity. As Tafari-Ama states:

> If we truly want to remove the obstacles inhibiting the cultural development of the majority class, we have to make a concerted effort to unravel the conceptual knots that inhibit analytical clarity. In view of the fact that these bonds of domination have been woven securely over centuries of systemic subjugation, we need to loosen the outer threads of the social status quo in order to get at the main strands of the power structures. (2017:41)

Using a transnational Black feminist framework, also means that discourses from marginalized communities are acknowledged and privileged. In my attempt to do this, I do not engage in romanticizing the experiences of women from disenfranchised sections of society but rather I engage in examining how Black women make-meaning of their experiences. These

frameworks focus on the perspectives and experiences of women as well as serve as a channel to provide counter-discourses to the hegemonic ones that exist (Collins 2000). Tafari-Ama states, "when those who control the power structure manipulate what is said about the body, they deliberately create registers of differentiation, which are then used as the basis of social inclusion or exclusion" (2017:52). Registers of differentiation are evident in the binaries that have been created in society inclusive of public/private, male/female, normal/deviant, objective/subjective and uptown/downtown, just to name a few.

Binary thinking has contributed to hegemonic discourse such that womanhood is also measured along the binary of normal/deviant. In the dominant discourse, 'normal' womanhood maintains that the ideal female is one who always remains conservative, respectable, or displays *decent* behavior. Guided by the previous argument of Tafari-Ama (2017), a woman who displays behaviors inconsistent with dominant notions of gender roles or norms stands the chance of being stigmatized and is often placed in the binary category of "deviant." This belief is extended to the Black community such that the labels that are associated with women of African descent are often conceptualized within a pejorative framework in the attempt to further stereotype and objectify Black women based on their intersectional location. It is with this in mind that it becomes essential to center the lived experiences of Black women where they can speak about their experiences and reclaim their body and subjectivity. Hammonds states that:

> Reclaiming the body as well as subjectivity is a process that black feminist theorists in the academy must go through themselves while they are doing the work of producing theory. Black feminist theorists are themselves engaged in a process of fighting to reclaim the body- the maimed, immoral, black female body- which can be and is still being used by others to discredit them as producers of knowledge and as speaking subjects. (1997:177-178)

Against this background, the theoretical epistemologies that I engage with understand the position of Black women in society and seek to deconstruct and examine society through the acknowledgment that each social location influences the other; therefore, they should not be isolated. These epistemologies recognize the importance of actively shifting frameworks of thinking, interrogating and understanding, and looking beyond hegemonic and isolated discourses to explain our experiences (hooks 1992; Bobo 1995; Collins 2000; Durham 2014). As such, the works of African American feminists and intellectuals such as bell hooks and Patricia Hill Collins, as well as Caribbean feminist scholars such as Imani Tafari-Ama, Carolyn Cooper, Patricia Mohammed, and Rhoda Reddock respectively, will be utilized in this study.

In summary, the relationship between transnational Black feminist frameworks and historical materialism offers a useful epistemological framework for this thesis. Through this relationship, one can see how both can be used together to identify how socio-political and economic structures that were present in colonialism influence the present Jamaican society where women of African descent still experience unequal treatment. It is also through these frameworks where it becomes evident that the institutionalization of racialized gender and class-defined ideologies in Jamaica has created a system that depicts women, particularly those from subaltern locations, as Skettels if they do not subscribe to European notions of respectability.

Methodological Framework

Now, my methodological approach for this research is also guided by a transnational Black feminist thinking. Transnational feminist frameworks argue that the process of doing research is just as necessary as, and sometimes even more important than the outcome. This position is immensely different from the traditional ways in which positivist research, one that

promotes objectivity, has been conducted by and reproduced in Western institutions and instead welcomes subjective positions. As such, to gain insights on how women in Kingston, Jamaica interpret, experience, and respond to labels, specifically the label of the Skettel, and to examine how social locations within the Jamaican context influence how these labels are constructed, understood and reproduced, I conducted qualitative research. Though there are several ways to do this, the one which was employed in this study is the ethnographic approach. Conducting an ethnographic study provided me with the opportunity to interact with the socio-cultural and political environment of the area and participants. This was done to learn their personal experiences with the label of the Skettel, if any, and the opinions of my participants. This ethnographic study began with ensuring that each woman that I spoke with understood that her participation was voluntary, that she had control of the questions which she wanted to answer and could withdraw from the study at any time. This was necessary to acknowledge as I understood that, in general, it goes beyond my personal needs as a researcher.

While my work privileges my participants' everyday experiences and subjectivity, it is also necessary to acknowledge the influence of positionality in feminist research. It is essential to acknowledge positionality when conducting research because how the researcher is located in society can influence the work that is done. Questions on positionality also trouble the power dynamic in qualitative research and call into question the tendency of researchers to distance themselves from their work. Therefore, for my study, I acknowledge my position as a working-class Black woman from Jamaica. However, in doing this work, I have employed what Abu-Lughod has stated, "to write with care and attachment rather than distance, to participate rather than remove myself" (1990:22) and to respect the women whom I spoke with and the experiences that they shared.

While in Kingston, I conducted field research by attending social events[7] and visiting areas such as a Half-Way Tree, Papine and DownTown[8] to observe the interactions that took place in those settings as well as to become familiar with the surrounding. This was done because previous work that reviewed gendered labels[9] used in the country suggested that labels that have been assigned to women in Jamaica became popular through the social and physical entertainment spaces and public spaces. While I did not recruit participants primarily from entertainment spaces, like public spaces, it was necessary to observe the interactions taking place in these various environments as "labels" become much a part of the vernacular or become normalized that you can identify its usage in different spaces.

Participants were recruited using both purposive and snowballing sampling methods. Before I continue, it must be noted that these participants and the information shared with me should not be regarded as a representative sample of Kingston, Jamaica. However, to explore the label of the Skettel, these were the women who volunteered to share their experiences with being associated with the label. In utilizing purposive sampling method, I recruited the initial set of participants however I believe that the concern of trust or familiarity did emerge in my study as some women whom I approached declined to speak with me and for some of those who did meet with me, in some interviews, I detected moments of hesitation while they answered specific questions. I believe that a part of what might have contributed to this was that even though I was an insider as Black, female and Jamaican, I was still an outsider to each woman's lived experiences, the fact that I had to acknowledge and respect. With this in mind, participants were also recruited using the snowball sampling method.

[7] Social events within the context of this paper is defined as street dances.
[8] These are three densely populated social spaces in Kingston, Jamaica that people utilize daily for market and trade with numerous vendors
[9] Popular gendered labels used in the country include but is not limited to: Skettel, matey and browning.

To learn the opinions and experiences of the participants, I conducted semi-structured, individual interviews within two different timeframes. In my first attempt to explore my topic, upon going through the information shared with me from those first set of participants, I realized that the information shared with me did not address my topic in its entirety. Therefore, I revisited my research site, where I interviewed thirteen Jamaican women ranging from 18-60 years old. These interviews included women in Kingston, such as college students, formal and informal workers. These interviews included questions that examined the definition of a Skettel, finding out whether the participants had personal experiences with this label and probing class and its relationship with labels in Jamaica. I also met with two Jamaican culture and gender experts while conducting my research, where I was able to gain invaluable information on the gender and class politics that exist within the country.

Chapter Abstracts

The Black woman in Jamaica inhabits a critical space where negotiations are made daily to locate themselves in a patriarchal society and challenge the systems that are indeed exploiting their bodies. In these daily negotiations, one can identify where the personal is the political. Questions of power, or the absence of, are evident in these spaces as well as the desire to keep power relations favorable to one group. One way in which this is done is through the policing of Black female bodies using gendered and racialized labels. While the Introduction of this study focused on contextualizing my research in Jamaica, in Chapter One, *Centering Black Women in Jamaica: The Politics of the Black Woman's Body and Respectability*, I focus on examining the politics of the Black woman's body to understand how this body has been conceptualized under global capitalism. This chapter considers the multiple ways in which the Black female body is

characterized, the falsehoods that surround the Black woman's body and it attempts to put these beliefs in conversation with the Jamaican societal expectations. In this section, I also employ the use of a critical transnational Black feminist framework to situate my arguments. This chapter also examines the concepts of power, control, who is a citizen, and who (which body) can be considered as a citizen or citizen (like) and how these ideologies relate to the Black woman's body.

In Chapter Two, *Respectability and Riot: Contextualizing the Label of the Skettel in Kingston, Jamaica,* I address the label of the Skettel, specifically. This chapter seeks to examine the questions: who is a Skettel, and what is the function of the word or label in the Jamaican society? For this reason, I deconstruct respectability and the politics of respectability to understand how the label of the Skettel is conceptualized within the Jamaican society. In doing this, I examine Jamaican cultural forms that the term was popularized in, particularly the dancehall cultural art form. Dancehall is a critical space to interrogate because of the style of dance, dress, and language that is used in this art form. Some see these aspects as seemingly vulgar, but some artistes and supporters of the art form see these elements as liberating. Therefore, it is necessary to deconstruct this cultural form and its relationship with the label of the Skettel. This chapter also discusses the tensions between Dancehall and Carnival culture in Jamaica.

In my final chapter, *Shifting the Veil While in A Crooked Room*, I focus on how the Black women whom I interviewed, who have been labeled as Skettels, interpret and respond to the label. In this chapter, I also examine how these women were socialized to see themselves in the broader society and how that influenced the actions that they took to move beyond the labels and

the tensions that arise in this process. Hence, this chapter provides the opportunity to examine how they negotiate their experiences and make meaning of them.

Finally, in my conclusion, I summarize the main points received from this research, and I articulate the need to recognize the lived experiences of these women and others alike. Particularly, I focus on the need to understand, acknowledge, and respect the situated truths of working-class and poor Black women as they navigate a society that was not created for them.

CHAPTER ONE

Centering Black Women in Jamaica: The Politics of the Black Woman's Body and Respectability

To name ourselves rather than be named we must first see ourselves. For some of us this will not be easy. So long unmirrored, we may have forgotten how we look. Nevertheless, we can't theorize in a void; we must have evidence.

Lorraine O'Grady, "Olympia's Maid", cited in (Hammonds 1997:170)

"The scripting of the Black female body is a relational, dynamic process. It is relational in the sense that the Black female body is scripted relative to Whites, Black men, and other Black women."

(Julia Jordan-Zachary 2017:30)

I start this section by stating that the Black female body is not a metaphor and should never be treated, read, or written as such. It is instead physical, marked by a history of material experiences and political, contesting systems of oppression in a myriad of ways. The experiences of each Black woman in the Jamaican society is not homogenous, but what tends to be clear is that systems at work engage in the privileging and exclusion of particular bodies. Against this background, this chapter focuses on examining the politics of the Black woman's body to understand how this body has been conceptualized under global capitalism. I will, therefore, explore the ways the Black female body is considered generally and in relation to the Jamaican societal beliefs. As such, this chapter also deconstructs the social locations of race and class in the country, through a gendered lens, and center the concepts of power, exclusionary politics, and control. While I engage in this work, I do not participate in a discourse that paints Black

women as victims, but instead, I seek to show how systems, when applicable, try to control the bodies of Black women and how they are understood.

Historically, capitalism has implanted itself in the sociopolitical and economic sectors of developing and developed countries (Sassen 1998). As a system, it has reshaped these societies in favor of capitalist schemas and, in turn, exploits and marginalizes the masses of these developing societies. Because of these injustices, two distinct social classes have been created and maintained: (1) a ruling class, who owns and controls the means of production and (2) the working-class, the people who serve as the labor source and are exploited in the process of production (Jalée 1977). Given this separation in the social and economic chain of production and ownership, for the ruling class to retain its power in society, capitalism must have and reproduce systems of unemployment to keep the scales tipped in their favor. It is here that Black bodies generally, and Black women's bodies specifically, reappear as commodities inside capitalist societies.

Under global capitalism, the Black woman's body has been conceptualized as property, hypersexual, ignorant, and inferior. This is because capitalism has framed Black women as ideal sources of labor to fuel market economies; therefore, they must maintain a narrative of otherness. By engaging in discourses of the other, and painting Black women as inferior, then this provides an avenue through which capitalism can control Black women's bodies. According to Brown and Gershon:

> Feminist scholars have argued that the body is both socially shaped and colonized. The politics of the body, different from the body politic, argues that the body itself is politically inscribed and is shaped by practices of containment and control. (2017:1)

The idea of containment and control is not new and has been institutionalized in how the Black female body is conceptualized. The Black female body is controlled through both economic and social tactics based on a system constructed on differences that seek to categorize bodies based on a subjective scale and reproduce notions of power. Enloe states that:

> To do a gender investigation fueled by a feminist curiosity requires asking not only about the meanings of masculinity and femininity but also about how those meanings determine where women are and what they think about being there. Conducting a feminist gender analysis requires investigating power: what forms does power take? Who wields it? How are some gendered wieldings of power camouflaged so they do not even look like power? (2014:8)

These questions that Enloe (2014) asks are relevant as they challenge simplistic narratives of togetherness. In the Jamaican society, power takes the form of political, economic, and social systems. It is controlled by men and those who represent social whiteness. Tafari-Ama argues that:

> Jamaica's private sector is run, to this day, by an infamous 'twenty-one family'[10] syndicate that still practices intergenerational inter-marrying, thereby solidifying business-class *alliances*… And although the bulk of their fortunes have been produced on local industrial and commercial soil, their primary business loyalties extend beyond Jamaica's shores. (2017:47-48)

In this system and its attending structural ideologies, Black women are one of the groups that are more severely affected such that even though they are "valued" for their reproductive and productive abilities, they are exploited for the very same reasons. Religious fundamentalism, a

[10] See *Blood, Bullets and Bodies: Sexual Politics Below Jamaica's Poverty Line*. The capitalist families in Jamaica include: Matalon, Mahfood, Issa, Henriques, Desnoes, Geddes, Stewart, Kennedy, DeLisser, Hart, Facey, Rosseau, Hendrickson, Ashenheim (Tafari-Ama 2017).

heteropatriarchal framework and movement, is not excluded from this conversation and represents one of the most historical articulation of power relations in society and is used to contain and control Black women's bodies in the country. Within this system, "women's bodies and minds, as well as the domestic and public spaces they occupy, become the primary ground for the regulation of morality and inscriptions of patriarchal control" (Alexander & Mohanty 1997: xxv) and discipline is enacted upon our bodies. According to Alexander and Mohanty:

> Women's bodies are disciplined in different ways: within discourses of profit maximization, as global workers and sexual laborers; within religious fundamentalisms, as repositories of sin and transgression; within specifically nationalist discourse, as guardians of culture and respectability or criminalized as prostitutes and lesbians; and within state discourses of the originary nuclear family as wives and mothers. (1997: xxiii)

These forms of discipline also reflect power relations in the society such that it becomes evident that women are positioned as inferior in the global context. It is at this point where it is necessary to utilize a transnational Black feminist theoretical framework to adequately address the place of gender, race, class, and sexuality in the lived experiences of Black women in the Pan African community. In the article *Nuancing the feminist discourse in the Caribbean*, Mohammed argues that:

> The discourse of history provides one crucial entry point as the exploration of one's history provides an analytical base from which we can understand how race, class, and gender divisions and relations are continuously being constructed and perpetuated. A feminist focus allows us to place gender theory and women at a central point of this inquiry, and at the same time making visible those interconnections of class and race. (1994:143)

Mohammed's (1994) argument is valid as the workings of historical periods have contributed to the current construction of society and how it is differentiated through ideas of

power, race, class, and gender. Therefore, it becomes essential to draw on feminist epistemologies, particularly conscious epistemologies, that seek to understand lived experiences and the role of a racist capitalist system in this process. Similar to the work of Mohammed (1994), the work of Collins (2000) highlights the need to centralize Black feminist thought in deconstructing society and its attendants such as patriarchy and capitalism to challenge the injustice that is present in the global society when it comes to Black women, and other women of color. Gender cannot go unaccounted for; therefore, discourses that seek to minimize and or exclude the voices of women, specifically disenfranchised women, should not go unchallenged for if not, this enables the politics of exclusion.

Exclusionary politics is both racist and sexist. It is patriarchal and classed. It is structural and institutionalized. It is deliberate and distinct. Exclusionary politics targets marginalized communities or groups and undermines the citizenship of these people and their experiences. I must first note that in my analysis of citizenship in this project, I conceptualize citizenship[11] through a paradigm of personhood in relation to dominant discourses' perpetuation of "Otherness". Eisenstein contends that "Otherness is constructed on bodies. Racism uses the physicality of bodies to punish, to expunge and isolate certain bodies and construct them as outsiders" (1996:21). By constructing Black bodies as outsiders, specifically Black women, then the promoters of these discourses are given a basis on which to exploit these bodies and deny Black personhood and label them as non-citizens based on perceived differences. The othering of Black bodies started in colonialism and likewise, was based on socially constructed differences

[11] In the dominant patriarchal conceptualization of citizenship, a citizen often refers to whiteness and masculinity (McFadden 2005). In addition to prioritizing gender in the construction of citizenship, bodies that are acknowledged as citizens are given economic and political power (McFadden 2005), whereas those that fall outside the hegemonic notions of citizenship are rendered as non-citizens. Now, this notion of citizenship highlights locations such as sexuality, race, gender, and class and what or who is categorized as a respectable body and, in turn, also defines which spaces these bodies can occupy.

that sought to create a structure in which whites could rationalize Black bodies as legitimate subjects for exploitation and objectification. It was also, and still is, a method used to implement the tactic of divide and rule which was pushed "as a mechanism of power and control" (Tafari-Ama 2017:45). Not only are these acts racially motivated but economically and politically as well. According to Tafari-Ama, social and:

> Physical differences are fundamental to the maintenance of antagonistic power relations in Jamaica between the state/elite (perceived as the political and socioeconomic centre of society) and the mass population (seen as peripheral). Thus, discourses of difference sustain ideological hegemonies of dominant over subordinate classes. (2017:46)

This idea of being the other, being non-citizens and being physically, socially, and politically differentiated historically promotes the politics of exclusion and has indeed influenced Black women's experiences in contemporary Jamaican moments. These tenets are visible in the neocolonial structures and ideologies of the Jamaican society that determine how Black women are situated in society, in the political economy and also how Black women's bodies are viewed particularly when they do not conform to dominant discourses on womanhood which includes the conceptualization of Black female bodies as something negative. The pervasiveness of harmful ideologies and images about Black women in society, the reproduction of notions of Black women as fundamentally inferior, and the inadequacy to counter these ideologies, therefore, become an essential concern for Black feminist intellectuals.

Using the frameworks of historical materialism and Black Transnational Feminism extends the conversation beyond incomplete statements that state that social behavior is just linked to personality but rather pull into the conversation how systems also contribute to the

politics of the body of working-class and poor Black women, how our bodies are understood and how it responds to discourses of power, control, and exclusion.

Contextualizing Patterns of Inequality in Jamaica

Black feminist discourse on race identifies that the exploitation and objectification of Black women are indeed tied to the notion of difference, the presence of a value gap, and the desire of patriarchal and capitalist systems to obtain economic and social power. While dominant narratives maintain that whiteness constitutes inherent superiority, Blackness is positioned as inherently inferior. This belief is consistent in capitalist societies where race is used to justify economic and sociopolitical power. Therefore, the racial dynamics that exist within the country of Jamaica is necessary to trouble in understanding how Black women's bodies are positioned within the society and how they negotiate their bodies in spaces that see them as Others.

The social inequality that exists within Jamaica is widely articulated as being based on class because of the perpetuation of discourses that maintain that Jamaica is racially homogenous. However, race, along with skin color, also does influence inequality in the country (Green 1995). As such, including race along with skin color within the arguments central to the Caribbean cannot be dismissed as ""colour" is historically derived from stricter notions of "race" and continues to be undergirded by those notions, but itself constitutes the more fluid index of historically specific adaptations in the Caribbean" (Green 1995:70). In other words, whereas in the general construction of race, Jamaica is seen as a majority nation with people of African descent, the local context of the country does pay attention to skin color gradations where brown bodies exist as well. This underlying racial dynamics in the Jamaican society highlights one of the most significant sites of struggle that working-class and poor Black women in the country

engage in as they navigate systems of objectification and exploitation based on their race and skin color and the color hierarchy that exists in the country.

As a result of how the society has been socially engineered, there is a relationship between skin color, power, and social status where preference is given to "high color[12]" and distinctly white bodies and features (Mohammed 2003; Tafari-Ama 2017). Three primary avenues in which this preference can be observed is through examining job allocations, perceptions of beauty and the practice of skin lightening. The privileged position that is given to lighter skin color is reflected in the type of jobs that are afforded to Black bodies in the country particularly Black women where most women are employed in service sectors and the tourism industry. It is also reproduced in how beauty is imagined and perceived and has manifested repeatedly in Jamaican beauty pageants where the winners of the pageants have usually been closer to European-like ideals of beauty (Edmondson 2003). Another way in which preference for white ideals has manifested in the country is through the practice of skin lightening or skin bleaching where persons who engage in the act maintain that economic and social opportunities and desirability increase depending on skin color (Tafari-Ama 2017). The value for lighter skin color is further evident in words that have become a part of the Jamaican discourse. During the 1980s, the term browning became popularized in the Jamaican society as a term to refer to those, particularly women, who were of a lighter skin complexion (Mohammed 2000). In an examination of this concept, Mohammed (2000), argued that race/color is interwoven with class/ power ideologies as well as with the notion of desirability. The arguments surrounding skin color

[12] The term high color is used among working class Jamaicans to define persons of lighter skin tones.

in Jamaica are not new but are necessary in this conversation in locating the construction of power and control and the place of desire, and “the desired" in the local context.

Now, the relationship between desire and skin color suggests that color becomes commodified and sexualized (Cooper 2004), where the association of Black bodies with the notion of desire is manipulated by the systems/agents of power, primarily capitalism and patriarchy. What the capitalist and patriarchal society of Jamaica does is focus on profits while simultaneously disenfranchising women. In this system, working-class and poor Black women are commodified for their prescribed inferiority and sexual deviance. One of the most relevant sites in which this is most evident is in the tourism industry on the island where Black women not only account for a large population of the labor force in this sector but the tourist organizations engage in a practice of the eroticization and exoticization of the Other to fuel sex tourism and the tourism industry in general. These discourses perpetuate that “Black bodies – male and female – are available to tourists for casual sexual encounters” (Tafari-Ama 2017: 297). In this framework, “the state moves to police the sexual and reinscribe inherited and more recently constructed meanings of masculinity and femininity, while simultaneously mediating a political economy of desire in tourism that relies upon the sexualization and commodification of women's bodies” (Alexander 1994:6). It is in these moments and contexts that Black female bodies become conceptualized as *the desired* to support capital accumulation, and this exploitation is “another reflection of the retention of race-determined social perception and relations in the corridors of discursive power” (Tafari-Ama 2017:297).

Outside of direct profit accumulation, what is desired by patriarchy and capitalism looks different as it relates to Black women’s bodies and further emphasizes these systems' need for control. It is here, too, where the conceptualization of *the desired* situates social and physical

behaviors/characteristics that are desired, which are respectable, which are also associated with whiteness.

Black Women, Notions of Respectability and Deviant Bodies in Jamaica

In the previous section, I examined race and class and its relations to power and control in Jamaica through a gendered lens. One significant matter that emerged at the end of the section was how capitalism and patriarchy manipulate a concept such as *the desired* based on its functionality. On the one hand, Black women's bodies are desired for profit accumulation. The other construction of Black women's bodies is characterizing Black women as undesirable to keep them/us in places of subordination. One of the primary ways this done is through creating and controlling the understanding of respectability and being respectable, particularly as it applies to women. Now respectability ranges across race, gender, class, and sexuality, but what is consistent is the need to show propriety, elevated social status, and symbolize a "difference from" the Other. With this in mind, it is, therefore, necessary to trouble the notions of respectability and deviance with power and control and the Black woman's body.

Now, one of the assumed signifiers of social class and race includes ideologies surrounding morality. In this study, morality is defined as behaviors that adhere to socially accepted moral standards. An important question that emerges is, who determines which behaviors are acceptable? In Jamaica, acceptable behaviors, moral values, and morality are determined by those in positions of power, namely the middle and upper class and other agents of capitalism and patriarchy. While discourses of acceptable and respectable behavior are maintained and perpetuated by these groups and systems, it also used as a method of social control to control the bodies and actions of the working class and poor Black women. Reddock

posits that "oppressed peoples' notions of "good," "bad, `natural," and "unnatural" are determined by the ruling classes' control of the reproduction of ideology" (1985:77). In this framework, behaviors are said to indicate class association such that "good" behaviors are assigned to upper class, and middle-class identities and "bad" behaviors are relegated to working/lower class identities. The notion of "good" and "bad" behavioral codes influences Black women in the country and is as much material as it is ideological.

Critical to this conversation is highlighting that notions of respectability in the Caribbean follow European colonial standards of respectable personhood. Green argues that during slavery, "the European owner-settlers defined civil and moral personhood by contrast to the conditions they imposed on enslaved Africans" (2006:3) and that "respectability is based on Eurocentric norms and values embedded in class-color systems of stratification and promoted by white churches, European marriage and a colonial education system" (2006:9). The influence of the church in Jamaica does not go unnoticed; however, a thorough examination of the church goes beyond the scope of this paper. Still, the missionary churches that existed in Jamaica during the post-emancipatory period were used to institute moral codes and intended to transfer the ideals of English middle-class ideologies into the Jamaican population (Green 2006). It is important to note that the church and the state are inseparable, and, in this relationship, the church in neocolonial Jamaica is an ideological vehicle for the state. Within this framework, the church interweaves religion and morality and reproduces these discourses, which provides further grounds to exclude those who do not conform to the status quo.

Against this background, it is evident that the notion of respectability is as very much gendered as it is racialized and classed. The question then becomes, with the systemic and structural apparatuses that were, and still are, used to control or police Black women's bodies

and label us as property, hypersexual, uneducated, lascivious and immoral, how do Black women navigate and negotiate their positions in these systems? It is at this juncture that it is essential to deconstruct the crooked room that Black women must interact with. Harris- Perry's (2011) analysis of the crooked room maintains that Black women engage in actions that oppose or conform to the dominant systems' conceptualization of Black women in society. In this framework, Black women negotiate their responses and actions based on a given situation, and, in some moments, they are able to "stand upright" in spaces (Harris-Perry 2011) that serve as sites of struggle for Black women.

The sites of struggle that Black women engage with are numerous, and how they respond to these sites is contextual. However, one way in which some Black women have responded to systems of oppression and objectification is through engaging in respectability politics. The term "politics of respectability" was introduced to the intellectual discourse by Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham and was used to describe "black Baptist women's opposition to the social structures and symbolic representations of white supremacy" (1993:186). The notion of the Black body generally, and the Black female body specifically, as something other than the ideal, was and still is a notion perpetuated in global communities. For women in the Black Baptist church in the United States of America, the goal was to counter these discourses by (1) asserting a position that, and in some ways, an identity that rivaled what was being prescribed by Western hegemonic narratives that were filled with negative images of Blackness and, (2) to restructure race relations (Higginbotham 1993). According to Higginbotham:

> Duty-bound to teach the value of religion, education, and hard work, the women of the black Baptist church adhered to a politics of respectability that equated public behavior with individual self-respect and with the advancement of African Americans as a group. They felt certain that "respectable" behavior in public would earn their people a measure

> of esteem from white America, and hence they strove to win the black lower class's psychological allegiance to temperance, industriousness, thrift, refined manners, and Victorian sexual morals. (1993:14)

Still:

> while adherence to respectability enabled Black women to counter racist images and structures, their discursive contestation was not directed solely at white Americans; the black Baptist women condemned what they perceived to be negative practices and attitudes among their own people. (Higginbotham 1993:187)

The argument above centers one of the main tensions with respectability politics in feminist discourses. The tension here lies in the fact that engaging in respectability practices also involves engaging in exclusionary politics and reproduces notions of power, control, and difference. Respectability, then and now, requires attending to acceptable manners, temperance, and sexual purity. Sexuality among the Black population has always been a "concern" for the state and perpetrators of respectability. Forde posits that "in contemporary respectability politics across the Atlantic world, the downplaying of sexuality, for example by adhering to particular dress codes, responds to the persistent phantasmagoria of black people as hypersexual, dissolute, and immoral" (2019:50). Therefore, some maintain that for Black people, specifically Black women, to attain social status and respectability, our "inherent hypersexuality" must be controlled. hooks contends that in the case of Black women, "trying to dispel the myth that all black women were sexually loose, they emulated the conduct and mannerisms of white women" (1981:55). In other words, to distance themselves from those "bad" behaviors, some Black women engage/d in behaviors that are/were predetermined as the desired, morally correct, and socially white. However, in engaging in these actions, a kind of tug-of-war occurs in that at

specific points Black women engage in policing their bodies and the bodies of other Black women. hooks argues that:

> As sexist ideology has been accepted by black people, these negative myths and stereotypes have effectively transcended class and race boundaries and affected the way black women were perceived by members of their own race and the way they perceived them-selves. (1981:70)

Although, both hooks (1981) and Higginbotham's (1993) arguments regarding respectability and its relationship with Black women were situated within the United States of America, make no mistake that these ideas were exceptional to the USA but were indeed transnational and the perpetuation of respectability became institutionalized within Black communities by certain Black individuals which in turn have serviced white, capitalist and patriarchal regimes. On speaking about women's sexual agency and erotic autonomy, Alexander argues that:

> Women's sexual agency, our sexual and our erotic autonomy have always been troublesome for the state. They pose a challenge to the ideological anchor of an originary nuclear family, a source of legitimation for the state, which perpetuates the fiction that the family is the cornerstone of society. Erotic autonomy signals danger to the heterosexual family and to the nation. And because loyalty to the nation as citizen is perennially colonized within reproduction and heterosexually, erotic autonomy brings with it the potential of undoing the nation entirely, a possible charge of irresponsible citizenship or no citizenship at all. Particularly for the neocolonial state it signals danger to respectability- not only to respectable Black middle-class families, but, most significantly, to Black middle-class womanhood, given the putative impulse of this eroticism to corrupt, and to corrupt completely. (1997:64-65)

For those Black female bodies that do not conform to middle-class notions of respectability, they are conceptualized by dominant discourses as deviant and indecent, but

perfect for political and economic exploitation to fuel racist capitalist desires. These discourses fail to recognize how these bodies situate and negotiate themselves in the local contexts of their societies where material conditions and the lack thereof "force women to accept a certain course in life" (Reddock 1985:77).

By classifying Black women's bodies as deviant and or indecent, this gives way to the labeling of Black women's bodies. The most notable accounts of the labeling of Black women's bodies started in slavery and were categorized based on the construction of difference on/in the bodies of Black women. This was done through promoting thinking in binaries that would situate something, or rather, the Black woman as the "universal other." According to Collins:

> As part of a generalized ideology of domination, stereotypical images of Black womanhood take on special meaning. Because the authority to define societal values is a major instrument of power, elite groups, in exercising power, manipulate ideas about Black womanhood. (2000:69)

Black women were categorized as sources of economic labor power and hypersexual, and through these categorizations, it was maintained that they could be labeled (Collins 2000). These, as Collins argues, were controlling images that were socially constructed, "each reflecting the dominant group's interest in maintaining Black women's subordination" (2000:72). Though the period of slavery has passed, these labels, and modern conventions of them, have not only been institutionalized where Black women are usually measured against these labels but also the devaluing of Black womanhood continues (hooks 1981). It is, therefore, necessary to note that "the systematic devaluation of black womanhood led to a downgrading of any activity black women did" (hooks 1981:70). Therefore, activities that Black women engage in are typically negatively constructed particularly if it does not conform to and with "true womanhood" an

ideology that positions women in the homes, as caregivers and as "moral" beings, morality being associated with one's association with the ideals of social whiteness and “good” behavior.

Conclusion

In unfolding the construction of race and class in relation to systems of power and control in Jamaica, particularly capitalism and patriarchy, this chapter has centered the arguments of transnational Black feminist scholars. The next chapter will explore factors that have led to the construction and reproduction of the label of the Skettel. This will be facilitated by looking at the gendered and classed cultural practices in Kingston with attention to the dancehall cultural art form. Essential concepts that will be deconstructed include respectability and riot and the public-private binary. Furthermore, in this chapter, I engage in a dialogue about how working-class and poor Black women express themselves through sexuality, verbal communication, dress codes, and behavior.

CHAPTER TWO

Respectability and Riot: Contextualizing the Label of the Skettel in Kingston, Jamaica

Tie the heifer, loose di bull (Tie the heifer, loose the bull)

Caribbean Proverb

The quote above is a popular Caribbean proverb that I used to hear frequently when I was younger growing up in Jamaica. For the average female, it meant that strict restriction was placed on the actions that she could engage in, and if you were a male, then you were able to roam the society with little to no restriction. In a newspaper article released in The Gleaner entitled *The Male of the Species: 'Endangered' or 'Extinct',* it was stated that "'Tie the heifer, loose the bull'" is, indeed, a black mother's explanation of how to rear a fairly 'protected' daughter for personal independence and motherhood and how to prepare a son for adventure and survival…" (Nettleford 2005:27-29). While I agree with the interpretation provided by Nettleford (2005) to an extent, I believe that the arguments inherent in this proverb are much more complicated given the sociopolitical and economic construction of a country like Jamaica.

To understand the complexity of this proverb and how it is significant in the construction of a label such as the Skettel, it is necessary to investigate how black women's bodies are policed and controlled, that is *tied*, to follow normalized social, behavioral and moral codes, that is, attend to the politics of respectability. To do this requires an investigation of how Black women's bodies are viewed through the public/private lens, one that is gendered, classed, and raced/colored in Jamaica. The ideological framework inherent in a proverb such as the one above emphasizes this public/private binary and reproduces discourses of power and control and

privileges patriarchy. Therefore, I argue that Nettleford's (2005) articulation that the quote is a "mother's explanation", should be pushed further to state that it is a *capitalist patriarchal society's explanation* of how to control Black women's bodies using methods such as respectability as a marker of “true” or “good” womanhood. This attention to *respectability* is particularly instructive as it lays the ground for not only understanding how the label of the Skettel is conceptualized but also contributes to understanding how notions on respectability and morality are attached to spaces and how Black women's bodies are *tied* (read policed) in those spaces. Therefore, I argue that the gendered and classed nature of the society informs how the (dis)respectable Black female body is constructed in Jamaica.

The principles of respectability regarding Black women are shaped by a history of racialized gender oppression globally. Generally, for marginalized groups, a strong emphasis is placed on attaining or engaging in acceptable behaviors to gain social status. This belief of respectability and the politics that follow it maintains that engaging in respectability politics involves criticizing behavior that is deemed as unfit, supporting beliefs/values that challenge stereotypes, and controlling one's behavior in support of White middle-class actions that are framed as ideal (Higginbotham 1993). As these principles are related to internalized beliefs and embodied practices, the gendered and classed nature of Kingston, concerning respectability and respectability politics, can be observed in cultural practices. Examples of engaging in respectability politics include but are not limited to, informing Black women to dress modestly. Institutionalized codes of decency govern most social spaces in Kingston. These codes are used to regulate behaviors through controlling dress codes, particularly that of women. This is

particularly evident in schools, the church, privatized businesses, and the parliamentary offices[13]. Conditions such as this reinforces dominant discourses that Black women should practice sexual self-control[14]. Another example comprises privileging standard English as a marker of respectability over Creole forms or what some may refer to as broken English. In Jamaica, Patois/Patwah is the language spoken by the majority however, it is recognized by dominant discourses as "lower class language[15]" (Tafari-Ama 2017:89). Therefore, it is often frowned upon by those from the middle- and upper-class backgrounds. What is evident here is that these approaches to (re)present respectability strengthen the values of the status quo locally and internationally while reproducing discourses of control.

Discourses of control are created by systems of power therefore, though some may think of respectability and respectability politics as just a moral matter, it is indeed tied to patriarchal and capitalist ideologies that reproduce ideas of power and legitimate bodies. Within the context of this study, the construction of legitimate bodies and the behaviors attached to these bodies, are tied to the recursive pattern of disenfranchising Black women's bodies and experiences while exploiting us for capitalist gain. It is within this framework of capitalism and patriarchy that Black women's bodies are tied to particular spaces such as the home but at the same time our bodies are marked as ideal workers. By this, I mean, that a patriarchal capitalist society maintains that the bodies of Black women are public property but relegated to private domains. However,

[13] See *Up in arms over Lisa Hanna's dress* by Carolyn Cooper. In 2017, Cooper (2017) released an article entitled *Up in arms over Lisa Hanna's dress* in The Gleaner, a Jamaican newspaper. In the article, she addressed the institutionalized dress codes that govern parliamentary rooms in Jamaica and examined how Minister Lisa Hanna was ridiculed for her choice of dress while in attendance at a parliamentary meeting.
[14] See Chapter One of this thesis.
[15] Tafari-Ama argues that "Displaced Africans in Jamaica created the indigenous language of Patwah as a *lingua franca* of resistance to colonial domination. However, the colonial period is viewed with shame by both the privileged classes and those of the subordinated category who have internalized dominant discourses of self-identification and self-depreciation. This embarrassment hinders the recognition of the local language as a cultural artefact of nationhood." (2017:88)

within both the private and public domain, the bodies of Black women should be, both in appearance and behavior, virtuous, pure and decent. Therefore, a necessary question becomes, what happens when Black women cross the boundaries of the private domain into the public space?

Edmondson states that:

> It is a truism of feminist theory that if the domestic space has traditionally been marked as innately and appropriately feminine, then the public space is masculine, such that, any crossing of the boundaries by women from private to public space must be interrogated and assessed as either a proper intervention that preserves the woman's femininity or a social violation that masculinizes or otherwise pathologizes her. (2003:2)

This position of women "crossing boundaries" from private to public space is indicative of the general notions of femininity and cements discourses such as women's place being in the home. When these discourses are reproduced in society by the dominant hetero-patriarchal frameworks in the country, they gain the ability to influence the body of individuals. One of the guiding frameworks used by Tafari-Ama in her work is troubling the space of "what is said about the body…" (2017:52) and "…what is said by it" (2017:52), particularly in the case of persons who are from subaltern locations. The historical stereotype that has followed Black women maintains that Black women are “the anti-woman, pathological, and lascivious viragos who undermine the nationalist project” (Edmondson 2003:2). This historical stereotype, she contends, has been the undercurrent of most Caribbean societies, particularly in those with a large population of people of African descent (Edmondson 2003). Within this framework, *what is said about* the Black female body is racialized, gendered and sexist and polices Black women's right to their freedom of expression and does not account for the inequality that exists in society. Therefore, hegemonic patriarchal narratives dictate that the acceptable way in which women

should express themselves or “behave” should be kept at a standard that is “respectable” in order to avoid offending/challenging the male gaze and should remain private and consistent with Western ideologies. To the public eye, these prescriptions do not allow for anything other than the prescribed behavior, however, if that is deviated from, then the women, especially the Black woman is perceived as without class and lacking morality. For example, a Black woman who speaks "loudly" is often seen as loud or aggressive. Or, a woman who is not fully covered is deemed as lascivious and loose. These descriptions identify what dominant discourses maintain as some of the defining “attributes” of the Skettel in Jamaica, and these ideologies have been institutionalized in households and internalized by many members of society who share the same manner of thinking. Men, on the other hand, are given more room to explore their masculinity (read "loose the bull"), which in turn provides a place to engage in hegemonic masculinity. The result of these ideologies and practices becomes the recursive gendered socialization of the Black female body that states that the *body* of the Black woman should be *tied* metaphorically to the home and the characteristics of the private space.

Against this background, the type of gendered socialization that women are exposed to play an important role in shaping how women view and situate their bodies within the country of Jamaica. In this conversation, I am not just thinking of a blanket conceptualization of gender socialization in the home. I am also thinking of systems and how they influence the body. Namely, in that women are socialized into adhering to a patriarchal capitalist system and reproduce notions of respectability that are consistent with European middle-class ideologies. Now, while this form of socialization starts within the home where ideas of femininity and masculinity are passed on to children, it, in turn, serves to define the respective gender role of women and men in society. Not only are roles of femininity and masculinity taught, but notions

of sexuality are engrained, particularly that surrounding womanhood, which shows girls how to be more "feminine" and follow Victorian standards of womanhood and morality (Allen 1998; Green 2006). Socialization also occurs outside of the home and in the broader communities. It is in those places where children may interact with new notions of personhood or where the dominant ones are reinforced. For example, the school serves as an institution for the transference of knowledge; however, the school systems in Jamaica follow a colonial and patriarchal structure, which again privileges masculinity over femininity. As such, notions of femininity that are dispersed, whether directly or indirectly, situates maleness as a top priority. Therefore, even in schools, girls are exposed to ideologies of difference based on their gender.

It is within this racist and sexist conceptualization that elements of these policed bodies and "bad" behaviors are isolated and commodified to fuel market economies controlled by patriarchal institutions. Furthermore, the economic opportunities that are afforded to women in the country are far less, both in quality and quantity, than those provided to males. This results in a system where women are underpaid, are provided with low-waged employment opportunities, and the country reproduces the myth of the male breadwinner (Green 2006) while the women who *run* their households do so with little to no help. This is done to facilitate not only the continuous gender gap that prevails but also to control the class dynamics within the country for the benefit of those who are members of the capitalist section on the island and the middle-class group. These unequal processes of socialization reinforce racialized and gendered grounds for the disenfranchisement, exploitation, and objectification of Black women in Jamaica. They also reinforce how the Black female body is viewed and understood by others and how the Black woman perceives and understands her womanhood.

Now, one of the critical components of this research is to recognize that the label of the Skettel goes beyond the sexualized woman in Jamaica. By this, I mean that the label of the Skettel seeks to define or describe a woman who does not fit the normalized societal construction of a *respectable* female in terms of not only sexuality but social disposition, speech/language, dress, and even employment. What we are left with is a label that conceptualizes this woman as deviant, one who has loosened the rope that *tied* her to the private domain. Again, this is a direct challenge to the status quo that I argue is *a necessary riot* that unsettles predetermined societal standards. The Jamaican society is placed in a particularly interesting position here where the motto of the country and how the country is advertised internationally becomes a direct contradiction to how specific bodies are treated on the island. The cultural and political conditions under which the label of Skettel is defined, forced, reproduced, and challenged is therefore essential to interrogate. Within Jamaica, one such avenue through which this may be accomplished is examining Dancehall.

Locating the Skettel in the Dance(hall)

Dancehall emerged as a cultural form in the country among the Black working-class section of the island as a site to challenge the inequality that exists in Jamaica. It was used as a medium for working-class people to voice their concerns about the social injustice that they faced daily in the country. Before I continue, it must be noted that though Dancehall emerged as a musical genre, it has taken an even more political stance as a physical and symbolic space that contests hegemonic discourses throughout the island.

The cultural form of Dancehall is often regarded as a contentious space as though some find it liberating; there are those who also find it to be both violent and *slack*. In arguments

proposed by Cooper (2004), she analyzes the Jamaican dancehall culture and the sociopolitical and economic concerns of dancehall as a social and political space. In her arguments, Cooper identifies *slackness* which she states usually has sexual connotations but believes that it:

> is a contestation of conventional definitions of law and order; an undermining of consensual standards of decency. At large, slackness is the antithesis of restrictive upper-class Culture. It thus challenges the rigid status quo of social exclusivity and one-sided moral authority valorized by the Jamaican elite (2004:4).

My attention to dancehall is not to state that the cultural art form is without its flaws as it is heavily patriarchal, but rather to show how the Black female body is imagined, understood and used within this space. Examining this space is relevant then as the cultural form is also a location where gender and class dynamics are contested in very public ways where lyrics on power, sexuality, and behavioral expressions are riddled within the songs that are produced, respectable dress codes are contested, and the forms of dance performed by participants showcases freedom of expression and challenge respectability discourses. Therefore, the characteristics ingrained in the cultural form are as much politicized as they are personal. It was also through this platform that labels such as Jezebel, Browning, and Skettel became popularized in communities to become part of the discourse of the people.

While the etymology of the word Skettel[16] is unknown, the label became popularized through several dancehall songs that conveyed the conceptualization of, and reactions to, the label. In the following section, I will highlight five songs, that were recorded by four Jamaican male artistes and one Jamaican female artiste respectively, where the label of the Skettel was explicitly used in categorizing women who do not conform to notions of respectability. I decided

[16] Skettel can be spelt as "sketel", "skettel" or "skettell" respectively.

to place the songs recorded by the male artistes in the order that they were released, as they were in some ways, continuing and reiterating the dominant conceptualization of the Skettel. Therefore, this provides an opportunity to engage in a review of the ideologies inherent in the lyrics rather than partake in a comprehensive discourse analysis of each song.

Skettell Bomb- Ricky General[17]

English yuh know gud gyal
Wi nuh wah nuh ole inna bell
Inna gud gyal Ricky General haffi dwell (how yuh mean)
Wi nuh wah nuh ole Skettell Boom
Seh wi nuh want dem bout yah
A gyal a Skettell then shi cyah come een yah (What a ting)

...

Every man outta road Skettel Bomb wah fi tek
Come in like a ole bus weh mash up an' wreck
Shi nuh stop from slam an' collec' bounce check

Skettel Concerto- Buccaneer[18]

Gyal from yuh body gud mek mi si di han' dem
Cah fi yuh lump, weh yuh clump, when yuh bump nuh condemn
Yuh nuh Skettel, yuh nuh skettel, yuh nuh skettel,
Dem body dun from when, everybody run dem weh
Shi body a car, dem take it too far
Dem change man everyday
But from a nuh suh yuh stay gyal, dem nah guh flex di wrong way

It nuh right fi every night
A new date come a yuh gate
Den a tell yuh neighbor dem
Oh no it's just a friend
Run dem away, run dem away

'My Decision', Abdel Wright[19]

[17] The song *Skettell Bomb* was released in 1995 by Ricardo 'Ricky General' Anderson.
[18] The song *Skettel Concerto* was released in 1996 by the artist Andrew 'Buccaneer' Bradford.
[19] The song *My Decision* was released in 2005 by Abdel Wright.

Girls dem plenty and the whole of them look good
Trust me some no really act as they should
Bad principles from birth to childhood
Old dirty ways gone inna adulthood

Anytime you see a girl, you like investigate it
Hard core no want no girl who bend up and switch
Think me like fe call a girl skettel and bitch
Who no have nu pride they deserve it

Skettel Shadow - Moses "Beenie Man" Davis[20]

Your mamma nuh trust yuh
Yuh pappa nuh trust yuh
So how you come around a expect man fi trust yu
Skettel pon sidewalk have gal lock a cuss yuh
A yuh buss di man dem unno di man dem buss yuh

When your madda tell you long ago
Never to walk inna nuh Skettel shadow
Weh she fail you should succeed
You nuh fi follow nuh gal a lead yuh fi lead

One of the first dancehall songs that could be traced that mentioned the label of the Skettel was titled *Skettell Bomb* by Ricardo 'Ricky General' Anderson, which was released in 1995. In 1996, the artiste Andrew "Buccaneer" Bradford released his song entitled *Skettel Concerto.* Within the narrative of these songs are beliefs that are consistent with the label, that is, 'immoral' women, and in the context of these two specific songs, women with multiple partners, are unacceptable. In the "respectable" Jamaican society, the notion of a woman with multiple sexual partners is considered unacceptable as this challenges societal codes of decency. Women are expected to maintain *singular* intimate relationships and if that figure is multiplied, then

[20] The song *Skettel Shadow* was released in 2010 by the artiste Moses 'Beenie Man' Davis.

society places scorn on that woman for her actions. In discourses produced in the songs, the artistes attempt to articulate not only their perspectives of the label but attempt to present their beliefs as that of a collective. This is evident in the language used in the songs through the inclusion of pronouns such as 'wi,' which means 'we', which suggests that the ideas being expressed stands as a group belief. However, this contempt stems from the historical action of the delegitimization of Black women as autonomous agents and the hyper-sexualization of Black women's bodies. In the colonial and this neocolonial era, Black women's bodies were and still are hypersexualized to justify the exploitation and objectification for the benefit of capitalist interest.

During slavery in Jamaica, slave owners such as Thomas Thistlewood exploited Black women's bodies under the notion that Black women's bodies were property (Burnard 2004). Black women's bodies were exploited for their productive and reproductive ability, and in this process, their bodies were further sexualized. This still takes place in the neocolonial society of Jamaica. In the case of a patriarchal and capitalist society, women are needed to work to generate profits and reproduce to add to the labor force. What this means is that patriarchy and its attendants seek to control this productive ability of women by dictating how women's bodies can operate such that if it does not fit within their standards or if not in benefit of their system, then that body is othered and considered disreputable.

This attention to conceptualizing Black women's bodies as property and the hyper-sexualization of Black women's bodies is evident in the narratives produced by the artistes through lyrics such as "Come in like a ole bus weh mash up an' wreck"[21] and " Shi body a car,

[21] English: She is like an old bus that has been overused and wrecked

dem take it too far"[22]. These lyrics suggest that through the lens of sexuality, these women are not only seen as property, likened to modes of transportation, but their value becomes fluid under these ideologies. These ideas are still present such that hegemonic masculinity is reproduced in this contemporary moment where lyrics such as "seh wi nuh want dem bout yah"[23] translated as "say, we do not want them here" and "run dem away", and the exclusionary politics inherent in them, can be reproduced in different ways. These statements are intended to create a distance between the woman who is seen as the Skettel and the normalized idea of *a decent or respectable* society. It is in these statements, and others alike, where Black women's bodies are policed. According to Kempadoo, historically "Women's sexuality, if seen unattached to men, was defined as lasciviously deviant——"good women" were constructed as sexual for procreative purposes and as sexual servants to men" (2004:19). Thus, the Skettel who is perceived as embodying these "questionable" morals are excluded from the general society and space is only available for the "gud gyal"[24]. The notion of the female body and how it is positioned, that is, whether it is "good" which is read as both physically and socially fitting or if it is "done"[25], again which is read as both as physically and socially, then is used as a method of labeling working-class and poor Black women's bodies in the country.

Another notable marker of the Skettel identity as articulated by the artistes established that these women who engage in these "lascivious" and "obscene" relations and behaviors engage in them for financial favors. The artiste states that the Skettel, "*Shi nuh stop from slam*

[22] English: Her body is a car, they have taken it too far.
[23] See page 51, line 15, "*Shi nuh stop from slam an' collec' bounce check".* English: She continues to have sex for money but does not get paid.
[24] Jamaican for "good girl"
[25] Cooper contends that "In Jamaican, "done" refers to both completion of an action and depletion of resources" (2004:86).

an' collec' bounce check"[26] which means that the woman who is labelled has sex for money but does not get compensated. Cooper argues that "sexual relations between men and women often reflect prevailing socioeconomic conditions" (2004:96). However, in the song previously mentioned, the artiste does not provide space to explain or acknowledge the political and economic reality of women, specifically working-class and poor Black women, in the country. Rather, he pushes the narrative that these women are unwelcome. It is within this framework that it becomes necessary to examine an essential difference between the agency of the Black woman to use her body for herself and the exploitation of the Black woman's body by capitalist enterprises for example in the tourism[27] industry of the Caribbean. While tourism provides job opportunities for a large section of the working class, the tourism industry of Jamaica, and the Caribbean in general, is highly sexualized however, it is usually in benefit of international capitalist entities and managed by transnational corporations (Pattullo 1996; Kempadoo 2004; Tafari-Ama 2017). Still, that is the length at which "questionable" behavior by Black women is accepted in a classed and gendered society.

In another song titled *Skettel Shadow* by Jamaican dancehall artiste Moses "Beenie Man" Davis released in 2010, the artiste addressed the label of the Skettel, reproducing the definitions that have been previously mentioned. Now, some may also interpret his statements as encouraging women who are perceived as Skettels to "better" themselves. However, what does

[27] A primary example in which this difference can be seen is in the tourism industry of the Caribbean. The tourism industry of the Caribbean is highly gendered and sexualized for an international market in favor of capitalist entities. As such, embedded in advertisements to market Caribbean tourism internationally are women, who are presented as representative of a "good time". However, the bodies and actions of the women in these advertisements, I argue, would fall under the same category of Skettel-like bodies and behavior when analyzed within a Eurocentric framework. However, because in these moments the woman and her body are perceived and received as beneficial to capitalism, then the "functionality" of the Skettel as a source of profit and fulfillment outweighs the constraints of respectability.

better mean? “Better”, in this regard, means taking on the position of middle-class respectability which is maintained by patriarchal ideologies. The proof of this proposition lies in the final stanza of the song where the artiste states:

Woman be woman and be strong
Cannot do what a man do, a still be a woman ovastand
A woman might seh mi wrong but cho
Woman is woman

It is here where you see the extent to which rigid gender constructs and its relation to morality are not only expressed and reproduced but also normalized. Tafari-Ama argues that:

> The cultural acceptance of *monogamy for the woman but not for the man*, is a schizophrenic value system that allows men to have multiple partners and promotes a political economy of contested relations between women who do not subscribe to this practice. Women who have multiple relationships with men are stigmatized as *sketels* which is not a good thing. (2017:37)

Furthermore, this narrative is also directly linked to the framework on which the proverb “Tie the heifer, loose the bull” is built on. The presence of a double standard as it relates to how men and women in Jamaica can think of and practice not only sexuality, but the general expression of self is clear in these lyrics and others. The messages entrenched in this song reflect the predominance of respectability politics and patriarchy in the country particularly as it relates to moral codes and conduct in how women are expected to behave in society.

Dancehall | Carnival | Respectability

Now, when "Skettel" is also taken as a racialized and classed label, one site of analysis that is imperative in this study, which links respectability and respectability politics to cultural practices, focuses on what Edmondson (2003) has identified as the *"politics of public performance."* The politics of public performance examines how Caribbean women navigate and negotiate performances or actions in public spaces. Edmondson (2003) analyzed this notion through the examination of the dancehall versus carnival dichotomy and women's bodies within these spaces. Carnival is another expressive cultural form performed in the Caribbean. It gained prominence in countries such as Trinidad and Tobago; however, over time, it was adopted in countries such as Jamaica. While there were conflicting arguments about the presence of carnival in Jamaica, the nature of carnival has changed in some respects, mainly where many of the persons who participate in carnival are from more privileged backgrounds. In fact, according to Edmondson , "Whereas in Trinidad carnival is embedded in deep historical traditions dating back to the combined religious rituals of the slave population and the Spanish slaveowners, in Jamaica the birth of carnival was a prepackaged, intrinsically commercial event" (1999:57). Though Edmondson (1999) acknowledged that carnival in Trinidad is also now a commercial event, there remains a difference in how it is practiced in Jamaica versus in Trinidad, and that is evident in the rigid class element of carnival in Jamaica.

Even though it is not an explicit rule or statement, carnival in Jamaica is performed by generally middle and upper-class individuals, which I argue was a strategic action employed by these respective classes. However, what is important to acknowledge here is that in these "performances", both males and females engage in what Eurocentric respectability values would consider as indecent behavior. While the dress and behavior of both males and females who participate in the carnival are similar to what is seen in the dancehall, carnival is favored by

individuals from privileged classes and the persons and behaviors that are evident in carnival is seen as “legitimate skettel behavior” in Jamaica (Carolyn Cooper, personal communication, 2020) where “upper/middle-class brown and white Jamaicans.. seemingly abandon respectability, parade their nakedness in the streets, and “get on bad” (i.e., pass for Black), on their terms” (Cooper 2004:138). This idea of a “legitimate” behavior is necessary to unpack as it highlights how much the country is tied to colonial practices that privilege distinctive positions and delegitimize others. What happens in the case of performances such as carnival and dancehall are that “the vulgar spectacle of black working-class dancehall women dancing obscenely in lewd outfits is transformed into “decorous” spectacle when performed by eroticized brown women" (Edmondson 2003:7). Carnival, and its attendants, are seen as the culture of the middle and upper class, while cultural forms such as dancehall are seen as the music or space of the masses (Cooper 2004). Edmondson’s (2003) attention to the class/color dynamics in the above quote is particularly instructive in this section as not only does it highlight the class relations that are apparent in cultural practices but it also brings into focus a material characteristic of a (dis)respectful body that is the attention to physical attire.

Black women’s physical attire is often policed under Victorian ideals of decency, that being attire and the bodies wearing the attire, becomes politicized. However, for women who participate in the dancehall and engage in dancehall fashion, Bakare-Yusuf (2006) argues that these women engage in the expressive body. She argues that “working-class Black women in Jamaica use fashion to fabricate a space for the presentation of self-identity and assertion of agency” (Bakare-Yusuf 2006:462) even when these actions are not verbally articulated. The literature on Dancehall fashion reveals that women who engage in Dancehall fashion utilize a “bare-as-you-dare” (Bakare-Yusuf 2006:465; Cooper 2004; Tafari-Ama 2017) approach which

includes but is not limited to wearing “figure-hugging short dresses and micro hot pants infamously known as “batty-riders” (Bakare-Yusuf 2006:465). However, this form of deportment is considered immoral by the dominant classes such that working-class and poor Black women who participate in Dancehall in this manner experience the politics of exclusion by these classes. Therefore, the class contentions between the respectable classed woman and the deviant Black woman from the working-class or poor background are reproduced and again, is used as a method to label disenfranchised Black women’s bodies.

Now, from the previous sections, it is evident that two things are consistent with the conceptualization of the Skettel: 1. that it is related to the working class or poor Black woman’s body and its relation to respectability and 2. that the acceptance of a woman labeled as a Skettel is controlled by dominant systems. The representation of female sexuality in the lyrics of the dancehall songs mentioned in the previous section shows that though the female body is given space to be acknowledged in different forms, bodies that are seen as more respectable are preferred and placed on a pedestal compared to those that deviate from the perceived norm.

Yet, it is also through the bodies of Black women that counternarratives emerge. Several Black feminist scholars have argued that the experiences and actions of Black women are indeed political (Collins 2000; Cooper 2004; Harris-Perry 2011). In other words, the actions taken by Black women have an ulterior meaning and those are fundamentally political. As such Black women who challenge the notions of being tied to private spaces, tied to respectability politics and enter and engage in “public” domains not only risk the stigma that is associated with her actions but also directly challenge gendered socialization even though these spaces are recognized as inherently patriarchal and capitalist.

In the song titled *Drop Me* released by Jamaican female artiste Cecile Charlton, the artiste stated:

Any bwoy want a wine tell dat come
Video light a shine so bad gyal nah run
Dis ya wining ting and we nah back dung
Mek a bwoy come yea we do dat fi fun
Ca wi a di queen a skettel kingdom
But dis ya skettel ya nuh quick fi lie dung
Mi nuh dat cheap nah gi mi man bun
But fram a dancing ting any bwoy welcome

The lyrics of the song expand on the meaning of the Skettel, but what is evident is that there is a difference in how the label of the Skettel is read. While the heteropatriarchal interpretation of the label of the Skettel, as observed in the previous songs, interprets the Skettel as pejorative and immoral, the approach taken by this female artiste engages in the form of reclamation of the label. This is emphasized in the lyrics "Ca wi a di queen a skettel kingdom"[28]. This female artiste recognizes that there are aspects of her behavior, particularly her attention to *wining*[29]*,* that could cast her as the Skettel when measured against European ideals of respectability. However, in the second line, she acknowledges that though she will take on the label of the Skettel, it must not be mistaken that she will automatically be available for sex.

[28] English: "Cause, I am the queen of skettel kingdom"
[29] Wining is a Caribbean dance that involves the circular movement of the pelvic region. This dance form is considered by dominant discourses as sexually suggestive.

Embedded in her narrative is a direct challenge to normalized conventions about the Black female body that supports patriarchy as she takes control of her own body.

This challenge can also be extended to the borders that Dancehall women challenge in Jamaica using fashion. Bakare-Yusuf states:

> It is clear that instead of emaciated abjection, dancehall women respond to their sociopolitical and economic plight through the multi-textural imprint of enculturated cloth. In a culture where appearance fixes and positions the agent according to a rigid signifying system, dancehall fashion and adornment actively contests and subverts the system of classification itself. Instead of allowing the body to collapse or be rendered mute and inexpressive inside the anxieties of everyday life, through clothing the body is presented as a voluptuous, radiant transcendence of crisis[30]. (2006: 476-477)

Though Bakare-Yusuf's (2006) argument was specific to Dancehall women's fashion, it moves beyond that where it highlights that working-class women in Jamaica actively negotiate their responses to systems and structures and engage in methods of self-expression, agency and contests systems of oppression. Tafari-Ama argues that:

> Individuals who so choose may instead engage in various discourses expressing independent agency: such as revolutionary or rebellious verbal dialogue; such as dressing in and wearing non status quo attire; such as displaying a non-traditional physical appearance in terms of hairstyle and grooming; or, such as dancing in provocative and sensational ways designed to showcase their belief that their bodies are hot commodities which should be desired and that are worth top dollar. (2017: 202)

Tafari-Ama's (2017) arguments were based on individuals who make up disenfranchised communities in Jamaica which of course includes working class and poor women. While the

[30] Bakare-Yusuf further states that through the actions of these women, they engage in a form of survival. One that "Instead of the fear of being called a "skettel" or a tart or seen as obscene, the dancehall woman dresses for herself and her community, without care for Jamaican uptown decorum and respectability" (2006:477)

actions that she references may be viewed as a direct challenge to the maintenance of social control by the various power structures in Jamaica, they also present an avenue for women who seek economic, social and political autonomy to mobilize themselves in a society where inequality persists. It is for these reasons that it becomes important to evaluate the experiences and perceptions of Black women in a country that is racialized, gendered and classed. Therefore, through reviewing the racial and class structure of Jamaica even through cultural expressions, provides a context to examine how Black women in the country situate and negotiate their lived experiences, their relationship with gendered labels and their subsequent responses to the systems in place.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to present an examination of how the label of the Skettel is conceptualized and reproduced in Jamaica, mainly by focusing on cultural art forms. As such, it outlined the relationship between respectability politics, class, gender, and color and argued that Black women's bodies and the spaces that they occupy are inherently governed by these social locations and the ideologies inherent in them. This chapter also examined five dancehall songs where the label of the Skettel has been explicitly referenced, and further looked at the conflicts within the articulation of (dis)respectable behavior using the dancehall-carnival dichotomy. These analyses are critical for this study as they show the complexity of the relationship of the room/site that Black women are often tied to in society. As such, the next chapter focuses on women who have been labeled as Skettels or as having questionable morals, as they share their lived experiences in Kingston.

CHAPTER THREE

Shifting the Veil While in A Crooked Room

Wash the white clothes on Monday and put them on the stone heap; wash the color clothes on Tuesday and put them on the clothesline to dry; don't walk bare-head in the hot sun; cook pumpkin fritters in very hot sweet oil; soak your little cloths right after you take them off; when buying cotton to make yourself a nice blouse, be sure that it doesn't have gum in it, because that way it won't hold up well after a wash; soak salt fish overnight before you cook it; is it true that you sing benna in Sunday school?; always eat your food in such a way that it won't turn someone else's stomach; on Sundays try to walk like a lady and not like the slut you are so bent on becoming…

Jamaica Kincaid 1983:3

When they confront race and gender stereotypes, black women are standing in a crooked room, and they have to figure out which way is up.

Melissa Harris-Ford 2011:29

Introduction

For many women who are labeled as a Skettel, their stories are often incomplete where those closer to systems of power can control the narrative of how these women are seen, interpreted, discussed and placed in society. This label is therefore a multifaceted phenomenon that I use to address systems of power, control and exclusion that use respectability as an apparatus in maintaining divisions in society. In the following chapter, I will explore the narratives and predominant themes that emerged in my interviews with women who have been labeled as Skettels in Kingston, Jamaica. It is important to note that in doing this, my aim is not to generalize nor state that this represents every Jamaican woman, nor every female that has been labeled as a Skettel, but rather to highlight the lived experiences of those women who I was

fortunate to interview. To hear their stories, understand how they make-meaning and negotiated their experiences with this label and beyond. With this in mind, I argue that the women who are labeled as Skettels reflect a site of ongoing struggle, as articulated by Cooper (2004), and in this struggle, negotiate their responses to (and or challenge) the normalized conventions of "respectable" female bodies.

Against this background, I approach this conversation guided by a framework of *truth and respect*. A framework grounded within truth and respect begs the questions, what is the truth behind the behaviors of working-class and poor Black women marked as inherently deviant bodies? Furthermore, how do I show respect to their lived experiences? Green states that "The subaltern subject is neither mute structural effect nor free agent. Rather, she negotiates or charts a contentious and difficult course between hegemonic impositions and materially and culturally constituted (and maneuvered) niches of autonomy" (2006 :7). Therefore, what I have come to appreciate is that within a transnational Black feminist framework is that the truth of working-class and poor Black women in Kingston cannot be dichotomized as they exist with a crooked room where agents of capitalism and patriarchy are present. As a result, working-class and poor Black women's beliefs, behaviors, and actions represent an active struggle as they work towards some form of self-determination. Beliefs, behaviors, and actions are not created within a vacuum. Therefore, in the attempt to understand the differences in the experiences of these women, how they see or interpret the label of the Skettel and what it suggests about the female body, it is necessary to examine how these women were socialized in understanding not only their physical bodies but ultimately their position in the society. In these conversations, understanding the "lived body" and "embodied subjectivity" (Kempadoo 2004:41) is important:

> for it is with these ideas that the physical body becomes more than an entity that is inscribed or marked by discourse, or is seen to exist or as a fixed or presocial natural condition, but is conceptualized as an organism that actively responds to change and contingency, that is self-organizing and a self-actualizing agent, constantly in a process of transformation and development. (Kempadoo 2004:41)

The focus on Black women's bodies and behaviors are key elements in understanding how these women situate themselves in society, the changes and transformations that occur, and how the dominant society create structures where these bodies are often excluded and treated as the monolithic Other.

As we have garnered from feminist studies, respectability is projected generally on women's bodies but specifically on the bodies of women of color and measured against whiteness. In this chapter, I will, therefore, examine how my participants interpret and respond to the label of the Skettel, the antithesis of respectability, by examining three predominant themes that emerged in the study. This included socialization as a method of constructing/reproducing respectability (what I have called *learning respectability*), examining instances in which these women were labeled as Skettels, and the tensions that arise in negotiating beliefs of and responses to the label. Finally, I will examine the issue of survival and what it looks like for women who are labeled as Skettels.

Constructing the Veil: Privatizing the Body of the Working-Class Black Woman

> *"This burden we put on women is patently unfair. I believe it is the cause of some of what is wrong with our society. We perpetuate a kind of 'Eve/Madonna' dichotomy where women are seen either as the temptress, the gold-digger, the skettel or as the wonderful, caregiving, heart-of-gold healer. So, we grow up thinking that there are two kinds of*

> *women. There are those who are true mothers and who should be revered and cherished. Then there are 'other women'. These are fair game for abuse and disrespect or to be ignored and disadvantaged."* (Keith Noel 2010)

In Chapter Two, I started with an examination of the Caribbean proverb *'Tie the heifer, loose the bull'* where I focused on how Black women in the Caribbean are usually raised in very conflicting ways that support the notion of respectability. In this process, women, mainly working-class and poor Black women, are taught middle-class ideals of womanhood, which includes, but is not limited to, chastity, domesticity, and sexual restraint (Mgadmi 2009). One of the themes that emerged from my research highlights these beliefs and can be considered as *Learning Respectability*. As a theme, *Learning Respectability* suggests that through conditioning, society instills expectations of respectability in relation to Black women. In this regard, Black working-class women are *tied* to the expectations of respectability, and in this process, a veil is constructed. My participants in my research came primarily from working-class or poor backgrounds, with most attaining some level of secondary education, and only three were able to enter tertiary education. Most participants revealed that they were raised in single-parent households headed by mothers or that included the presence of extended family members.

While addressing how they were raised, one participant stated that:

> Well, I really only had my mother, my cousin. Jus' like ma siblings, ma mother an' ma cousin, that a grow- grew up with. My mother, she tried to be strict, she was the per-parent who tried to be strict knowing that she was an only parent for four of us. Suh she tried to be strict, she tried to grow me up properly, tried to make me that good child. She tried to make me go to church, I loved going to church by the way. But yes. So she, a

believe she put out her best effort to have me grow up as dat good child.[31] (Interview 2019)

Another participant stated that she was raised mainly by her grandmother and stated:

> Shi did mek mi wash plate. Shi nuh usually wash wi clothes dem fi wi suh mi mi neva know how fi wash at dat time. Yeh but since mi guh live wid mi baby fada, mi like wash, cook an' clean. When I was at country wid ma cousins, mi twin cousins. They were older than mi but they always left the cleaning up to us, me an' mi breda. An' shi wudda mek mi clean di house an' wash clothes. Mi wudda dweet this week an' shi wudda do it next week an' den me dweet di oda week an' she dweet di oda week.[32] (Interview 2019)

Another participant stated:

> I was very sheltered suh I don't have much of a childhood experience because ah was very sheltered by mom, ma parents. So, in house mostly. I didn't go out to play much. Kinda like, as a said, basically up to dis date am still dat kinda person because dats how I was raised in a community. It was a very, you'd call it a violent community. So, the ghetto den. So, my mom thought it was best for me to be a little sheltered an' protect me from everything else that was going on around me, to be raised how she wanted me to be raised. Suh shi think it was a okay, keep me under her shelter…[33] (Interview 2020)

Another participant stated:

---

[31] English: Well, I really only had my mother, my cousin. Just like my siblings, my mother, and my cousin, that I grow- grew up with. My mother, she tried to be strict, she was the per- parent who tried to be strict knowing that she was an only parent for four of us. So, she tried to be strict, she tried to grow me up properly, tried to make me that good child. She tried to make me go to church, I loved going to church by the way. But yes. So, she, I believe she put out her best effort to have me grow up as that good child.

[32] English: She made me wash the plates. She did not usually wash our clothes for us, so I did not know how to wash at that time. Yes, but since living with my child's father, I wash, cook, and clean. When I was in the country with my cousins, my twin cousins…They were older than me, but they always left the cleaning up to us, my brother and me. And she would make me clean the house and wash the clothes. I would do it this week and she would do it the next week and then I would do it the other week and she would do it the other week.

[33] English: I was very sheltered, so I don't have much of a childhood experience because I was very sheltered by my mom, my parents. So, in house mostly. I didn't go out to play much. Kinda like, as I said, basically up to this date I am still that person because that's how I was raised in a community. It was a very, you'd call it a violent community. So, the ghetto then. So, my mom thought it was best for me to be a little sheltered and protect me from everything else that was going on around me, to be raised how she wanted me to be raised. So, she thought it was a okay, keep me under her shelter.

> Suh, I grew up Adventist, yeh ah grew up in a very sheltered home. Ah wasn't exposed to a lot of things. It was church, home. Suh, a grew up wid blinkers on. Suh, church, home, path finder club, an' choir practice, bible study.[34] (Interview 2019)

The narratives of these women reveal the ways in which they were raised. Most of these women were raised in very "sheltered" ways and with strong attention to domestic duties and the church. The notion of "sheltering" Black women in Jamaica is two-fold. On the one hand, it is a direct action to avoid the violence[35] that permeates in the society and on the other hand, it is used as a form of social control of Black women's bodies. While I do not dispute that the violent nature of some communities necessitates protective actions, the notion of "sheltering" working class Black women also points to what Nettleford stated where mothers in Jamaica seek to raise "a fairly 'protected' daughter for personal independence and motherhood" (2005:27-29)[36] and what Kincaid (1983) articulates in the first epigraph of this chapter. However, what is critical to note is that raising *girls* in the Caribbean, even in relation to the two-fold understanding of "sheltering", is done in a patriarchal structure. Bailey states that "Undoubtedly, the speaker in "Girl" locates herself within this larger patriarchal structure with the presentation of a list of clearly defined roles and markers of respectability based on the standards of the dominant culture" (2010:108). Within this structure, there is a direct socializing of supposedly feminine characteristics that females are raised to believe and internalize, which in some ways reproduce the metrics of Eurocentric femininity and further integrate notions of the private female body. The private body, as it relates to women, characterizes notions where the female expression of self is diluted to the benefit of class-conscious citizens. However, when it comes to the private

[34] English: So, I grew up Adventist. Yes, I grew up in a very sheltered home. I wasn't exposed to a lot of things. It was church, home. So, I grew up with blinkers on. So church, home, path finder club, and choir practice, bible study.
[35] See Tafari-Ama (2017), Blood, Bullets and Bodies: *Sexual Politics Below Jamaica's Poverty Line.*
[36] See Chapter Two, *Respectability and Riot: Contextualizing the Label of the Skettel in Kingston, Jamaica.*

black female body, another element is added where the woman is fully excluded from social and political structures and economic opportunities and is exploited to the benefit of those in power. As such, in some homes, black women are "groomed" to fill in roles that have been historically labeled as Black and inferior spaces. Firstly, while one may argue that teaching a Black woman domestic duties such as "washing," "cleaning" and "cooking" are necessary "skills" in the Global South, the aptitude at which it is in done in working-class households, particularly in the raising of Black women, reproduces discourses of the domesticated Black woman that ties Black women to the home and reproduce stereotypes of the Mammy or Black women as the help globally.

Throughout the interviews, it was also evident that there was a commonality of participants' engagement in the church when they were children. The role of the church in Jamaican households from an early age is, directly and indirectly, political as it introduces Black women to a system of respectability politics that is perpetuated by and in the church and further subject Black women to religious fundamentalism. Jamaica is a highly religious country where Christianity accounts for the major belief on the island. With religion playing such a large role in these homes, and by extension, institutions such as schools, values of Christianity are therefore reinforced from an early age such that ideals on morality and sainthood become part of the psychological make-up of some Black women as the ideal form of being a woman. In *Can We All Be Feminists? New Writing from Brit Bennett, Nicole Dennis-Benn, and 15 Others on Intersectionality, Identity, and the Way Forward for Feminism*, Nicole Dennis- Benn shares that:

> Growing up, I was always aware of this act of sainthood, but I never had these words to describe what I was seeing. In fact, I never knew that I, too, was subtly beginning to adapt to this unspoken rule, growing up as a Black girl inside a body already deemed public property, available to the lust of older men… Growing up in Jamaica, up until that

> point it had been hard for me to picture grown women as anything other than pious and godly. I used to wonder if the women I knew had ever dared to put their skirts between their legs to play hopscotch or double Dutch… I yearned to know who they were before they clutched their Bibles, folded themselves up, adjusted masks of sternness or displeasure with the secular world, and covered their bare brown legs with long skirts. Before they became good at silencing us with one look and murmuring statements like "God help us". (2018:23-24)

This moral nexus is present throughout and, when combined with class ideologies, presents a design to control the bodies and actions of women, particularly those seen as deviant. Another participant stated that though her parents told her to love her body while growing up, societal pressures did influence how she conceptualized her femininity and sexuality. She stated:

> In our society, they want a glorified church girl, you know like a naughty little girl in the bedroom…Yes yuh know a lady in the streets an' a freak in the sheets however, there has to be a common ground. Ah remember once my biological grandmother on my father's side, she is this churchy going person. In her head, she's mightier than though, higher than though. All a that bullshit. However, I am the type a person, I like to figure things out myself. I like to seh oh hey, march to the beat of my own drum as they wud say. An' with her, ma biological side of the family, they're expecting oh coverup, wear like turtle-necks an' you know, the long baggy jeans an' all a that. Yet, that's not me. Yes, yuh know jeans an' tshirt an' jeans are fine, but we live in a hot ass country. Show some skin. Like completely covering up is not an option. An' it took a while to actually mitigate like that middle ground an' for a long while ah had to figure out is this how a dress, is this me? I remember when I was like late 18, 19, around that time, like ma ex-girlfriend and I had just broke up an' ah guess I went through an identity crisis in a sense. So, ah didn't feel feminine and ah didn't feel masculine. Like what the hell am I? And ah wud literally dress androgynous every day. Ah felt uncomfortable wearing a skirt or a dress. Suh a baggy jeans, t-shirts, big sweaters and a tam and that was me. An' it took me a while to find okay hey, figure out my femininity and who I am. And ah think took a little over a year and in that year everybody that was close to me called me a ghost. Cause I was

> literally a ghost and a hollow version of myself. Suh a didn't feel com-…somebody who rarely likes to wear clothes, covered up. Suh everybody's like what's going on? Suh I was literally hollow shell of myself. (Interview 2019)

In the experiences shared above, learning respectability is evident and leaves more to unpack. One thing that must be highlighted from her revelation, though, is how respectability and simultaneously deviance is constructed on Black women's bodies through sexuality. In my participant's revelations, it was evident that those in her closest proximity policed her sexuality through how she chose to express herself through physical attire and sexuality. This attention to sexuality is essential as it also brings into focus how heterosexuality is normalized and is considered respectable. All other forms of sexuality are regarded as deviant, particularly if it does not add to the economy. Alexander argues that in the eyes of the state:

> Not just (any) body can be a citizen any more, for some bodies have been marked by the state as non-procreative, in pursuit of sex only for pleasure, a sex that is non-productive of babies and of no economic gain. Having refused the heterosexual imperative of citizenship, these bodies, according to the state, pose a profound threat to the very survival of the nation. (1994: 6)

This is particularly true in Jamaica where non-normative sexual relations are still ostracized by the society and "the promotion of this heterosexism is expressed in terms of an overwhelming anti-homosexual rhetoric" (Tafari-Ama 2017: 208). However, evident in my participant's narrative is that it shows that though these veils are constructed, some Black women do challenge the points of reference that they are given.

Still, in this process of constructing the veil and reproducing respectability, other forms of control are utilized to police working-class and poor Black women's bodies. In one interview, on speaking about her upbringing, a participant shared that:

> Ah think it's pretty obvious by now that ah don't mek a lot of eye contact. It's very hard for me to mek eye contact because in my household, that was used as a form of intimidation. Think that's the first time I've said it out loud, but that's what it felt like. Suh ma mother or ma stepfather… Suh ah don't mek a lot of eye contact because it was used in ma house as a form of intimidation, discipline, whatever… Yeh. Ma stepfather was terrible, an' it it, it was very like aggressive. Suh it forced me to be a *tame, calm, docile* person. And ah love my mother, suh ah always wanted to do what she said till a started to get uneasy jus doing what she said.[37] (Interview 2019)

These methods of intimidation, as expressed by my participant and alluded to by Dennis Benn (2018), articulate other ways in which Black women's bodies experience policing in Kingston. These methods are deliberate actions of control that further emphasize how Black women are conceptualized by dominant structures as public property (see Chapter Two of this thesis). As such, some of these women were socialized to embody a private self. By doing this, it reproduces discourses that are common in the Victorian construction of femininity, where words such as 'good,' 'properly,' 'sheltered,' 'tame,' 'calm' and 'docile' become a measure of respectable womanhood.

[37] English: "I think it's very obvious by now that I don't make a lot of eye contact. It's very hard for me to make eye contact because in my household, that was used as a form of intimidation. Think that's the first time I've said it out loud, but that's what it felt like. So, my mother or my stepfather… So, I don't make a lot of eye contact because it was used in my house as a form of intimidation, discipline, whatever… Yes. My stepfather was terrible, and it it, it was very like aggressive. So, it forced me to be a tame, calm, docile person. And I love my mother, so I always wanted to do what she said until I started to get uneasy just doing what she said."

However, while the responses given above offered variations of gendered socialization and learning respectability within the home, one participant alluded to "being raised" more so by the experiences within the wider community. She stated:

> Umm fi tell yuh di truth, mi think more likely me being on di streets, an' di type a people weh as a mi start guh high school mi start flex roun, teach mi certain tings. Mi mada- mi mi step fada cuss, him nuh really teach, a cuss dem man deh cuss. Him usually cuss an seh "bwoy if yuh deh pon road suh late, yaa guh get belly before time. Man only want one thing an' a pussy an' as dem get it, it done an' a dat alone dem waa". An' a jus suh him usually talk. Yuh understand? Him nuh usually teach yuh like seh, teach yuh certain things, yuh understand? But when mi usually guh high school an' yuh know seh mi start fi flick round sum bigga people an' different girls an' si certain things an' know certain things, an' as dem wudda call it street smart.[38] (Interview 2020)

Right away, the narrative shared above articulates that Black women also learn about themselves and society based on the different experiences that they have "in the streets." The streets, read as public spaces in society outside of the home, allows for further socialization to take place and even offers an avenue to challenge societal beliefs or reproduce them. The place of "the streets" in research such as this is particularly important to interrogate as this location is particularly gendered and classed when referring to Black women's bodies, respectability, and the label of the Skettel.

The dominant sectors of the society, as it relates to gender and class, maintain that women are usually thought to belong in the private domain and their behaviors are expected to follow that

[38] English: " Umm to tell you the truth, I think more likely me being on the streets, and the type of people that as I started going to high school I started to flex around, taught me certain things. My mother- my my stepfather curse, he didn't really teach. Those men curse. He usually cursed and said "boy, if you are on the road so late, you will get pregnant before time. Men only want one thing and it's pussy and as they get it, it ends and that's all they want". And that's just how he usually talked. You understand? He didn't usually teach you like, teach you certain things, you understand? But when I usually go to high school and you know I started to flick around some bigger people and different girls and saw certain things and know certain things, and as they would have called it street smart."

order as well.[39] This suggests that women should always exhibit *decent* and *respectable* behavior befitting the role of the domesticated woman. It is important to acknowledge that these ideologies are maintained across class; therefore, even within a class, Black women are expected to conform to the standards of the general society[40]. When this positioned is challenged, that woman's *citizenship* is questioned, and she becomes a prime target of gendered and racialized labels, such as the *Skettel*, that seek to mark her as something *other than* the norm, a non-citizen, vulgar, indecent, disrespectable, the anti-thesis to respectability.

Ripples in the Veil: Deconstructing the Complexities of Black Womanhood

By engaging in behaviors that do not adhere to the normalized codes of decency, respectability, and heteropatriarchal conceptions of femininity, the working-class or poor Black woman ultimately *creates ripples in the veil* that was previously constructed. Ripples in the veil represent how working-class Black women negotiate their responses to dominant discourses. To understand how participants, navigate and negotiate being categorized as deviant, I asked my participants about their experiences with the label of the Skettel and how they responded to being labeled.

When asked if she had ever been called a Skettel before, one interviewee responded:

> Yeh. Whole heap a time. All different name to. Bitch, whore, skettel, di whole value bag. Bwoy di amount a name me get called an' class to backside mi cyah even talk. But wah, when dem a call mi suh, mi seh "thank you, wow, good morning to you, thank you". A suh mi behave. Cau wah? No words can break my bone. From yuh nuh touch mi, a deh

[39] See Chapter Two, *Respectability and Riot: Contextualizing the Label of the Skettel in Kingston, Jamaica.*
[40] See the song *Skettel Shadow,* Moses 'Beenie Man' Davis in Chapter Two of this thesis.

> suh it done. A suh dem gwaan against dem one aneda, but wah? Words don't shake me.[41] (Interview 2020)

Another interviewee revealed that she was labelled a Skettel by the mother of her child's father. Speaking specifically about how her "mother-in-law" addressed her, she stated:

> Shi seh skettel like shi wudda seh but most time shi seh it in a funny way. But me tek it offensive. Dem sumn deh a nuh nice sumn fi call yuh daughter-in-law. Yah an' shi wudda call mi bitch…[42] (Interview 2019)

Another interviewee stated that she has been labelled as a Skettel and a whore. She stated: "I've been told that I'm only good for one thing, being on my back" (Interview 2019). Another interviewee shared that she has been called a Skettel several times. While recalling an instance where she was called a Skettel, she stated that "I was going out in this short shorts and there was this lady like, they were talking an' shi saw mi an' seh she's a skettel because of what she has on." (Interview 2019). She went on to say that after being called a Skettel, she:

> actually felt a way because you know I was young, this little girl, an' this lady come talk bout I was a skettel because of what a had on. So, I actually felt a way. Like I felt really bad."[43] (Interview 2019)

When asked to explain why she felt bad with being associated with the label at the time, she responded saying, "I jus' thought that it was a bad word. Ah thought she was disrespecting me.

[41] English: Yes. A lot of times. All different names too. Bitch, whore, skettel, the whole value bag. Boy, the amount of name that I have been called and classed, I can't even talk. But what, when they call me those names, I say "thank you, wow, good morning to you, thank you". That's how I behave. Why? No words can break my bone. From you do not touch me, that is where it ends. That's how they act against each other, but what? Words don't shake me.
[42] English: She said skettel, like she would usually say but most time she says it in a funny way. But I take it offensive. Those words are not nice to call your daughter-in-law. Yes, and she would call me bitch…
[43] English: I was hurt because I was young, a little girl and this lady looked at me and called me a Skettel because of what I was wearing. So, I was hurt. Like, I felt really bad.

So yeah. Ah thought she was disrespecting me. She was trying to break down my self-esteem suh yes." (Interview 2019).

Two critical factors must be highlighted from the experiences expressed by the women above. Firstly, the association with the label of the Skettel has the possibility of influencing the self-esteem of working-class Black women and, secondly, that Black women engage in policing other women's bodies as well. Many of these women were directly labeled as Skettel from parental figures, strangers, acquaintances, and even from a family member of their respective partners. Because of the inherent pejorative nature of the label, when used by members of the society in reference to Black women's bodies, the label of the Skettel often takes the position of an insult. In this paradigm of internalized patriarchal practices, the intent is clear, and that is to reduce and control the bodies of Black women by attacking their feelings of self-worth. As a result of the negativity that has been attached to Black women's bodies and the label of the Skettel in Jamaica, Black working-class and poor women exist within a space where they must continuously negotiate how they position themselves in society and respond to systems of power. The structures that surround these women are countless and, in turn, influence the actions taken by women to become citizens or acknowledged as citizens and autonomous agents and to stand up-right (Harris-Perry 2011). As a result of this, whereas some working-class and poor Black women who have been labeled as Skettels appear as indifferent to the label, others respond differently where their feelings of self-worth become negatively affected.

Another important element of examining working-class and poor Black women's behavior and conceptualization of respectability as a gendered place is the influence of patriarchy and manifestations of it. In this light, I am looking at how Black women's behaviors have been affected by gender relations in Kingston. Now, for Black women who are labeled as

Skettels or do not follow normalized conventions of respectability, there are several physical, social, and psychological concerns to women who in expressing their agency, risk being harmed by outsiders. In the gendered framework of society, Black women whose physical attire is marked as indecent, are seen as either "looking for attention," "selling sex" or "inviting" sexual advancements from men. One participant shared that she experienced one incident where, while walking on the road one day, a man 'grabbed' her 'ass' to which she responded by slapping him. Her response was a defense mechanism used to protect herself from sexual harassment and the exploitative tendencies that tend to follow Black women's bodies in the society as we are often viewed as property. However, the act of "grabbing" a woman's ass because she appears *indecent* because of her physical dress, demonstrates that women who do not follow societal codes on respectability are not only subject to the label of the Skettel (and others alike) but also the type of exclusionary politics that fail to recognize Black women's citizenship (see Chapter Two of this thesis). In the interview, the participant stated:

> I describe myself as a free-spirited person. I wear what I want suh if I decide that okay, I waa wear a batty rider today, I'm going to wear a batty rider today. But dat batty rider does not mitigate those cat calls or harassment or "Yow baby or yow yuh pussy fat" or whatever. No, it's because hey I feel good wearing a pair a shorts today. I'm going to wear a pair of shorts. An' ah think in our society men look at false sense of entitlement.[44] (Interview 2019)

Her statements reflect the heteropatriarchal construction of the society that allows men to engage in gendered and sexist acts and ideologies. Not only does this type of system reproduce notions of the hypersexualized Black woman as a significant identifier of the Black female body

[44]English: I describe myself as a free-spirited person. I wear what I want so if I decide that okay, I want to wear a short shorts today, I'm going to wear a short shorts today. But that short shorts does not mitigate those cat calls or harassment or "Yo, baby or yo, your pussy is fat" or whatever. No, it's because hey, I feel good wearing a pair a shorts today. I'm going to wear a pair of shorts. And I think in our society men look at false sense of entitlement.

but it further suggests that Black women are inherently promiscuous without acknowledging our ability to own our sexuality or freedom of expression in general. In one interview, a participant shared that:

> The definition weh people use bout skettel, dem wudda be like yuh have a whole heap a man, you're wild. Cause Jamaicans yuh know, is like if dem si yuh a road deh talk to two niggaz an' like di two niggaz[45] deh a distance from yuh, "what a gyal bad an' shi full a man yuh si". Yeah, that's their term of it. Yuh doh really have that wide scope where yuh can jus sit an' talk to a male without you an' the male being in anything then. Like Jamaicans when yuh seh I have a male best fren- "a male best fren weh a give yuh sumn doh". Yeh that's what they're like.[46] (Interview 2019)

What is happening here is that Black women's bodies and actions are being policed by agents of power. These beliefs are held by dominant discourses in society because "It is important for power brokers to enforce strict codes about sexual 'transgressions' in order to preserve the prevailing gender and political orders" (Tafari-Ama 2017:44).

Now, in chapter two, I discussed that respectability politics is usually identified and enacted through three primary mechanisms, one being where a Black woman will manage her behavior in favor of White middle-class ideals. During my interviews, one participant shared that her association with the label of the Skettel stemmed from interactions that she engaged in during her tertiary educational years. She stated:

[45] In Jamaica, "niggaz", is a term used to refer to a male.
[46] English: The definition that people use bout skettel, they would be like you have a lot of men, you're wild. Cause Jamaicans you know, it is like if they see you on the road talking to two niggers, and like the two niggers are at a distance from you, "what a girl bad and she is full of men, you see". Yeah, that's their term of it. You don't really have that wide scope where you can just sit and talk to a male without you and the male being in anything then. Like Jamaicans when you say, I have a male best friend- "a male best friend that is giving you something though". Yeh that's what they're like.

> University enabled me to like meet different kinds of people an' that's how I met my, the people that ah used to hang out with, an' the people ah hang out with now. People who would be considered uptown based on where I come from. That's how I ended up being called a skettel because within that circle, ah smoke, ah drink openly. I am loud, I do curse but for me those things are just me being able to express myself an' jah know, Patwa sweet. Yuh si like when yuh drop in ah, like when yuh really a talk fast an' yuh ah express yuhself an' yaa seh wah yuh waa she. An' mi nuh know, especially when you're high, yeh man it can come off a bit… is abrasive the word? Yeh. An' for my uptown frens who haven't been cultured that way or have never seen express that way, to them that's just sumn foreign. Suh now you a skettel cause to their knowledge of what a skettel is, is somebody weh jus loud, their intrusive, dem mek nuff noise, dem probably have sex wid a bag a, as you were saying before, have sex wid a bag a people. Yeh. Suh, I come off to them as a skettel.[47] (Interview 2019)

In this conversation, my participant pointedly illustrated how the Skettel is conceptualized in the middle and upper classes, that is, uptown. As a young Black woman from a poor background, society's expectation of her was to enact the normalized private body, however, her actions in performing acts such as drinking, smoking and being loud challenged middle-class respectability and patriarchy (as drinking, smoking and being loud are often categorized as 'masculine' acts) and was grounds for the labeling of her body. One thing that is relevant to note in the interviewee's experience is that the conditions for the assignment of the label of the Skettel are not static. These moral and social codes are not limited to only devices

[47] English: University enabled me to like meet different kinds of people an' that's how I met my, the people that ah used to hang out with, an' the people ah hang out with now. People who would be considered uptown based on where I come from. That's how I ended up being called a skettel because within that circle, ah smoke, ah drink openly. I am loud, I do curse but for me those things are just me being able to express myself an' jah know, Patwa sweet. Yuh si like when yuh drop in ah, like when yuh really a talk fast an' yuh ah express yuhself an' yaa seh wah yuh waa she. An' mi nuh know, especially when you're high, yeh man it can come off a bit… is abrasive the word? Yeh. An' for my uptown frens who haven't been cultured that way or have never seen express that way, to them that's just sumn foreign. Suh now you a skettel cause to their knowledge of what a skettel is, is somebody weh jus loud, their intrusive, dem mek nuff noise, dem probably have sex wid a bag a, as you were saying before, have sex wid a bag a people. Yeh. Suh, I come off to them as a skettel.

surrounding sexuality and sexual agency but also includes areas such as the language use in the country. By this, I mean that the recognized primary language of Jamaica is English; however, some individuals use the Jamaican language of Patwa/Patois in both written and oral communication. As I discussed in chapter two, Patwa is seen as the language of the lower class, and those who tend to speak in Patwa are often ridiculed for this action and characterized as "ghetto," aggressive, and even vulgar. This, again, adds to the class contention of the uptown-downtown dichotomy that exists in Jamaican, a contention that can be easily seen in Kingston. Her friends were "shocked" at her behavior because coming from a social location demarcated as "uptown"/middle/upper-class", they are socialized closer to the European standards of behavior such that behaviors that are inconsistent with how they were socialized, women who display opposing behaviors are seen as "foreign," indecent and "skettel."

These statements above allow us now to further examine how locations, whether geographic or metaphorical, become manipulated by capitalism and patriarchy in the conceptualization of propriety. From the interviews, it was expressed that most of the time that women are usually labeled as deviant occurs in public spaces such as the streets. This does not come as a shock because the streets are seen as a masculine domain. As such, patriarchal ideologies are inherent in these spaces, and any attempt by a female to be "present" in these spaces is considered as a direct challenge to the social order. In talking about Caribbean women and the notion of performance, Edmondson stated that historically, "black working-class women were usually described as loud, lewd, and not respectable because they were too strong to be "protected" by black men and also because they were always "in the street"" (2003:4). This particular statement is essential in the conversation as it not only points to the overarching definition that the Jamaican society maintains of the Skettel, but it also identifies the connection

to spaces where Black women's bodies are labeled. The question then becomes, why would these women enter these spaces and enact these forms of expression or behaviors, even where these prevailing ideologies exist?

Shifting the Veil: Survival at Work

The answer to the question above lies in one simple but very complex word: *survival*. Survival for the Black woman from a working-class or poor background is complex because we exist in a space that dictates that we must remain in the private domain but exist as public property. This limits the independent movement or actions that black women can take particularly in a context where: 1. the crooked room exists 2. respectability is given credence, and 3: respectable femininity/womanhood looks white in a predominantly Black country. What this suggests is that not only is the label of the Skettel gendered, racialized/ colored, and classed, and generally black women's bodies/actions are racialized, gendered, and classed but also that their actions/behaviors are negotiated based on their lived experiences and the hegemonic structures and systems at work in the society.

As mentioned in the previous section, the label of the Skettel is strongly associated with Black working-class women challenging conventions of respectability by crossing borders into "street-like" behavior. However, the reasons why women may enter the streets[48] (read physical and metaphorical street) stem from a general desire to survive, to engage in self-expression and

[48] Here I am conceptualizing "the streets" as both a physical and a metaphorical location. The street signifies a public physical location that is conceptualized through dominant heteropatriarchal discourses as a masculine space/domain. Under this framework, women (respectable women) are usually not allowed in these "public" spaces. Therefore, if a woman enters the street, then her body is no longer read as being respectable. In other words, capitalism and patriarchy conceptualize the street as a respectable space for the man, but women who enter the streets are conceptualized as disreputable.

to access opportunities that will allow them to support themselves and their families. While asking one participant reasons why she believed she has been labelled as a Skettel, she stated:

> As mi seh, most a di time mi in di street an' ah only people weh a juggle an' umm higgler an' according to some people, skettel love street. Suh mi sell in di streets, mi work… Now mi work, suh most a di time mi deh in di streets. Yuh wudda haffi seh I'm a ven- well not really a vendor but am a seller. Suh most people wudda call mi skettel cause dem si mi in di streets yuh haffi seh almost every day.[49] (Interview 2020)

The interviewee shared that she works at a bakery in Kingston for two days out of the week. When she is not working at the bakery, she is on the streets of downtown Kingston selling popular Jamaican dessert items and sweets. For her, this is her source of income to support her family, but her presence in these areas, along with how she speaks and her physical appearance, has caused her to be labeled as a Skettel and even as a "mad gyal." My participant's interpretation and response to this label are further complicated, considering that she was raped by her stepfather when she was younger. When she shared this experience with me, she was close to tears as she recalled what she went through, particularly without the support of her mother. Tafari-Ama argues that "The prevalence of rape emphasizes the gendered nature and impact of masculine expressions of power" (2017:33). This is a critical point because the stereotype of Black women as deviant means that the issue of rape is often conceptualized as a "Black woman problem" and not as what it actually is, which is a racist, classist, patriarchal, sexist, misogynist, and capitalist problem. This is her truth. Therefore, even though she rejects the label, she is not ashamed of her "street-like" behavior as she shared:

[49] English: As I said, most of the time, I am in the streets and it is only persons who 'hustle' and umm higgler. And according to some people, Skettels love the street. So, I sell in the streets, I work… Now I work, so most of the times I am in the streets. You would have to say that I am a ven- well not really a vendor but I am a seller. So most people would call me a Skettel because they see me in the streets almost every day.

> …cause a di end a di day, mi a try survive even though dem a give mi names, a call mi mad girl. Me grow up now afta all mi guh chru. Mi traumatize yes, according to how dem wudda seh mi act, mi nah fraid. Some a di time when mi deh by mi self, mi cry.[50] (Interview 2020)

For her, her experiences in the past has encouraged her actions now while still acknowledging that there is still an emotional reaction towards what she has gone through.

Similarly, another interviewee, a higgler by profession and who has been labelled as a Skettel, stated that her presence "in the streets" is her method of survival and any actions that she engages in, such as being "loud", is to ensure that she and her children are okay as she believes that women have to engage in a more active role in controlling their lives. She stated:

> Well fi tell yuh di truth, we di woman dem inna Jamaica, we haffi set our self. We definitely haffi set our self. Wah wi want inna life, wah wi want come to an' wi kids dem, if we don't set dat, nuhbady else cyah set it.[51] (Interview 2020)

The basis of her argument is relevant, mainly when related to the sociopolitical and economic state of Jamaica. Regarding the women that I spoke with, their employment status ranged from unemployed to employed. What was evident in the conversations with these women was that for those women who were employed, the work that they were doing was not their desired jobs, but it was what was available to them. Women in Jamaica are primarily employed in service sectors, a legacy of slavery that has positioned Black women in areas of servitude (Green 2006). Often, the notion of sex is associated with these positions. One participant stated:

[50] English: Because at the end of the day, I am trying to survive even though they give me names, even call me mad girl. I have grown after all I have been through. Yes, I am traumatized, according to how they would say I act, I am not afraid. Sometimes when I am by myself, I cry.
[51] English: Well to tell you the truth, we the women in Jamaica, we have to set ourselves. We definitely have to set ourselves. What we want in life, what we want ourselves and children to come to, if we don't set that, nobody else can set it.

> Yuh si down here, sex sells an' yuh si like if yuh have a product or yuh have a item, weh yuh a guh get? Yaa guh get two nice sexy girl fi sell it cause ooman wi more get hired dere suh. Yuh si down here suh, once it's about sex, sex sells.[52](Interview, 2020)

This point is crucial because it demonstrates how the dominant society manipulates the notions of respectability to fuel capitalist agendas. While there are critiques of how Black women position themselves in specific spaces, it is necessary to remember that these actions are inherently political. However, with the presence of historical stereotypes of the hypersexualized black woman ingrained in the society, these ideologies are manipulated for the elite sectors where the individuals in those groups retain the most profit through exploitative tendencies. This same body that is relegated to private domains can be used in public spaces once it is for the benefit of those in power. This shows that the definition of respectability is mutable, depending on who is using it and which body is being measured. What I am saying here is that if these same actions that are usually considered indecent are undertaken by the black working-class woman independently, then the woman is seen as lacking self-respect. One interviewee, who identifies as being from the ghetto, and who has been labelled as a Skettel because of her dress, speech and her tendencies to be "loud" stated that:

> As it relates to self-respect, ah think it's how yuh portray yuhself. But even if you think yaa portray yourself in a good way, somebody might seh dat nuh good or whatever. Self-respect has nutten to do with how you dress or behave because you know you better dan anybody else. For instance, me have a brassiere an' a shawt shawts an' mi guh outta door, dat nuh define me. Dats just what I'm comfortable in.[53] (Interview,2019)

[52] English: You see down here, sex sells and you see like if you have a product or you have an item, what are you going to get? You are going to get two sexy girls.
[53] English: As it relates to self-respect, I think it's how you portray yourself. But even if you think you are portraying yourself in a good way, somebody might say that it's not good or whatever. Self-respect has nothing to do with how you dress or behave because you know you better than anybody else. For instance, if I have a brassiere and a short shorts and I go outside, that doesn't define me. That is just what I'm comfortable in.

Another participant stated that when it comes to being called or identified as a Skettel:

> if it means that okay, I've had more than one sexual partners and I'm willing to wear a batty rider every now an' then and I am willing to date outside my gender, sure why not. I'm a skettel den… My thing is as long as I'm practicing safe sex an' I'm being safe an' I'm happy, an' I'm enjoying life, if yuh want to call me that, go ahead, have fun. As long as it's not making me hungry, I have a stable place to sleep at night, I'm having a steady income. I have my education. Sure, call mi what you may. Jus' don't touch mi an' I'm fine.[54] (Interview 2019)

While their arguments reflect these women's general desire to express themselves freely, that is not the consensus in the society as gender and class constructs dictate behavior and subsequently how you are treated in society. These women are not ignorant of these ideologies and find that in moments, they have to engage in the act of policing their bodies to access certain opportunities in society and at the same time too, engage in a discourse of policing other women's bodies[55].

It is here where even though some of these women who have been labeled as Skettels appear indifferent to the label, they still have to negotiate their engagements with the politics of respectability. This is because how society is structured dictates that depending on the space that the woman is entering, then there are institutionalized behavioral codes that may limit their access to specific opportunities particularly those that are socially and economically based. At this juncture, it is important to note that tensions emerged in some of my participants' arguments or narratives, tensions that highlighted how actions are negotiated. One participant who stated in

[54] English: If it means that okay, I've had more than one sexual partners, and I'm willing to wear a short shorts every now and then, and I am willing to date outside my gender, sure why not. I'm a Skettel then… My thing is as long as I'm practicing safe sex and I'm being safe and I'm happy, and I'm enjoying life, if you want to call me that, go ahead, have fun. As long as it's not making me hungry, I have a stable place to sleep at night, I'm having a steady income. I have my education. Sure, call me what you may. Just don't touch me and I'm fine.
[55] See Chapter Two of this thesis.

the interview that she does not allow the comments of others to influence her actions also stated that:

> Me is a person like dis, yuh haffi know di time an' place an' when to act. Me is a person like dis, when mi go out, a different behavior. Mi know how fi go out an' portray mi self. If mi a guh pon an interview, mi know fi dress, mi know what not to wear an' what not to do when I'm in a different type a crowd. When I'm in a different type a crowd, ah have a different behavior. Yuh have some ooman dem just cyar di same behavior, how dem behave dung town, a di same way dem behave a dem yaad an' behave wid dem fren, a di say way dem go out an' behave.. Yuh cyah expect people a guh treat yuh suh. An' a how yuh behave attract di type a people weh yuh come in contact wid an' meet wid.[56] (Interview 2020)

Her reflection is indicative of how some working-class Black women engage in the politics of respectability to gain access to spaces and opportunities. However, it is also indicative of the institutionalized codes of decency that permeate society and its relation to gaining access and social status (see Chapter Two of this thesis). It is at this juncture where those who have been labeled as Skettels but stated that they reject the label itself becomes relevant to understand. One participant stated that she has been labeled as a Skettel but rejects the label, particularly if it is coming from a stranger. She stated that when it comes to the label of the Skettel, her reaction to it varies:

> Probably if yuh playing around wid your friends cause yuh know it's our culture to seh oh you a skettel or yuh bhuttu like. But for somebody that ah don't know, never met before, just encountering them for the first time, for them to be calling me that, it would

[56] English: I am person like this, you have to know the time and place and when to act. I am a person like this, when I go out, it is a different behavior. I know how to go out and portray myself. If I go to an interview, I know how to dress, I know what not to wear and what not to do when I'm in a different type a crowd. When I'm in a different type a crowd, I have a different behavior. You have some women that just carry the same behavior, how they behave down town, it is the same way they behave at home with their friends, it is the same way they go out and behave… You can't expect people to treat you that way. And it is how you behave that will attract the type of people that you come in contact with and meet with.

be humiliating. You don't know me, you don't know what my personal attributes are or ma character. Nah. I wouldn't accept that personally.[57] (Interview 2020)

Interestingly, this suggests that the label of the Skettel can be seen as a term of endearment by close friends from working-class backgrounds, but when the labeling comes from an outsider, the intention behind the label is perceived differently and is seen as an insult to the respective woman. Another participant revealed that although she has been called a Skettel, she also rejects the label of the Skettel and instead sees herself as a "young lady." These narratives further revealed the negotiations that working-class and poor Black women make to stand upright in a crooked room.

When talking about her experience with pejorative labels in Kingston, one participant expressed that a common theme with the labeling of Black women's bodies lies in the reality that sometimes the reasons, especially the ones that are sexualized, that people use to label women, hold no merit. She stated that:

> Um when mi usually like… me an' mi fren dem usually like deh out pon di road pon di wall siddung out deh an' a chat, soon afta di nex morning yuh hear seh wi dem pon di road a sell pussy, diss an' dat an' mi mada usually bex. An' at one point, when mi tell yuh seh rumours get to mi a point mi not even wah guh a road. Eye wata a cum a mi yiy. Mi feel shame when mi hear some tings weh mi hear some people a talk bout mi but yuh know wah a di ting, nutten nuh guh suh. Yuh si most ooman have low self-esteem but dem doh really show it. Yuh understand? Low self-esteem. Yuh understand? An' me did have trouble wid dat, me did have low self-esteem. Yuh call a mi an' sumbody ova deh suh call mi a bitch, mi feel a way an' yuh know which mi know mi a nuh bitch. But growing up, mi learn fi move past it an' get ova it. Now, mi nuh even careee! Mi nuh

[57] English: Probably if you are playing around with your friends because you know it's our culture to say "oh you are Skettel or you are bhuttu like". But for somebody that I don't know, never met before, just encountering them for the first time, for them to be calling me that, it would be humiliating. You don't know me, you don't know what my personal attributes are or my character. Nah. I wouldn't accept that personally.

> even care. Mi nuh business weh dem waa seh enuh. Mi bore all mi tongue an' dem all seh mi suck hood, mi diss, mi dat, bwoy mi not even know how hood taste… Now mi olda, mi get ova dat… Words nuh bhadda me again because yuh si at di end of di day, mi still a live, mi still a eat an' yuh know wah, mi nah beg dem nutten an' none a dem nah provide fi mi. Mi feel comfortable.[58] (Interview 2020)

Her revelation highlighted two key elements that are worth exploring. Firstly, she mentions that most women have low self-esteem but do not show it. Her admission here is quite revealing as there is a tendency in society for Black women to take on the constructed image of a *strong woman* (Harris-Perry 2011). These stereotypes are reproduced such that it becomes normalized that Black women should internalize emotions as opposed to showing perceived signs of "weakness". However, taking on this image negates basic mental health needs that are necessary for any human to navigate their environment. Secondly, her ability to overcome the societal pressures of conformity, of respectability, of challenging spatial boundaries, is evident in her transition from wanting to stay within private spaces to avoid labels to exercising her agency in how she uses her body. The very act of piercing her tongue, a seemingly indecent act by respectable society, becomes a metaphor for breaking her silence in how she thinks of her body and situates herself in society. Similarly, another participant shared that when she was in high school, her behavior changed from what was considered the normalized, good, feminine behavior to one that would allow her to express herself more freely, one that was "loud,

[58] English: When I was usually… my friends and I usually hang out on the streets, on the walls, sitting and talking. Soon after, you would hear that I am on the road selling sex, this and that. And my mother would usually be upset. And at one point, when I tell you that rumors got to me to a point I did not even want to go on the road. Tears came to my eyes. I felt ashamed when I heard some things that people would say about me. But you know the thing about it, there was no truth to it. You see most women have low self-esteem but they do not show it. Do you understand? Low self-esteem. Do you understand? And I had trouble with that, I had a low self-esteem. If you called me bitch, I was hurt which I knew that I wasn't one. But growing up, I learned to move pass it and get over it. Now, I don't even care! I do not care. I do not care about what they have to say. I have even pierced my tongue and they say that I am into oral sex, I do this, I do that. But I do not know what oral sex is like. Now I am older, I am over that. Words no longer bother me because at the end of the day, I am still alive, I am still eating. And I am not begging them anything. I am comfortable.

rebellious, skettelish." Their overarching actions, therefore, became social and political protest and highlighted the site of struggle and the negotiations that Black women make, in a society bent on maintaining boundaries and binaries.

It is within these tensions and negotiations that a new possibility emerges to conceptualize the label of the Skettel. An interviewee shared that her view of the Skettel differs and believes that the Skettel should not be seen as something pejorative. She shared:

> I don't think skettel is like a term that people should use as a bad thing. Ah think it's a term where people used fi describe themselves as… I like to be… Tonight is a Friday night suh I wud like to dress up in my shorts an' probably a have ponytail that is like red or purple an' I'll be putting it on. An' ah doh have 5/6 piercings but ah have those magnet earrings dat gwine look like a 5/6 piercings. An' ah like to put on those sticker tattoos that look real real. Suh yuh know, people gwine si me in the club an' seh she's a skettel based on how mi look an' how ah dress. An' it's not a skettel, is di way yuh choose fi express yuhself as a person. You're not dat person but for di night, yuh want fi be dat person, like a character dat yuh go into for a night or for a moment to say yeh. But ah doh think skettel should… like people when people call dem a skettel, dem use it fi break down the female fi cry. Cause I used to cry first time like 7th grade an' 8th grade when ma mom used to call me dose words. An' ma teacher was like to me, you're not a lady unless you're confident. Shi like, yuh si my short skirt, shi like "yuh tink seh nobody in here suh like me? Dem oda teacha deh inna dem spike heel. Yuh si mi a wear a spike heel come here?" Shi seh "yuh notice my clothes dem? Everybody in here call me skettel". Ma 7th grade teacha tell mi dat cause wi used to sit down an' have conversation. She's like everybody in here call mi skettel but it nuh come in like nutten to me cause me a nuh skettel. She said it was like a figure of speech. My dressing is like a figure of speech. Dats what she used to explain to mi…To me I don't see skettel as a bad term, I see skettel as an art. Ah call it is an art…[59] (Interview 2019)

[59] English: I don't think Skettel is like a term that people should use as a bad thing. I think it's a term where people use it to describe themselves as… I like to be… Tonight is a Friday night so I would like to dress up in my shorts

My participant's admission to becoming aware of the intent of the dominant society's use of the label of the Skettel demonstrates both the title of this section, *Shifting the Veil,* and the argument that working-class Black women do inhabit a site of struggle. This occurs when women who have been conditioned to adhere to respectability challenge conceptualizations of respectable womanhood. Within both standpoints of rejection of the label and the negotiation of what it means, one thing was clear, and that is the active struggle of these women for self-determination. In her active struggle for self-determination in a capitalist patriarchal society, she conceptualizes the behaviors of a Skettel as art, as a necessary form of expression that allows her to have moments to break away from the strictures of society. Her active struggle also acknowledges that these actions do not occur in insolation but also based on the solidarity that is formed with other women who are challenging systems of oppression, control, and exclusion.

Situated Truths: A Necessary Respect

I will close this chapter by recalling an event that happened during my research. While completing my research, I visited one of the public hospitals in Kingston, Jamaica. While I was there, I met a young woman by the name of Charmaine[60]. Charmaine was a higgler and was

---

and probably I have a ponytail that is like red or purple and I'll be putting it on. And I don't have 5/6 piercings, but I have those magnet earrings that will make it look like 5/6 piercings. And I like to put on those sticker tattoos that look real. So, you know, people are going to see me in the club and say she's a Skettel based on how I look and how I dress. And it's not a skettel, it's the way you choose to express yourself as a person. You're not that person but for the night, you want to be that person, like a character that you go into for a night or for a moment to say yes. But I don't think skettel should… like people when people call them a skettel, they use it to break down the female so that she will cry. Because I used to cry initially, like in 7th grade and 8th grade when my mom used to call me those words. And my teacher was said to me, you're not a lady unless you're confident. She was like, you see my short skirt, she was like "do you think that anyone in here likes me? Those other teachers are wearing high heels. Do you see me wearing high heels here?" She said, "do you notice my clothing? Everybody in here calls me a skettel". My 7th grade teacher told me that because we used to sit and have conversations. She's like, everybody in here calls me skettel but it doesn't bother me because I am not a skettel. She said it was like a figure of speech. My dressing is like a figure of speech. That's what she used to explain to me…To me I don't see skettel as a bad term, I see skettel as an art. I call it an art…

[60] Name changed.

selling an assortment of face towels that were pink, blue, yellow, and green, respectively. I told her about my research, where she became quite vocal and related her experiences with the label of the Skettel. She shared her story while we walked back to the heart of Princess Street in Down Town, Kingston. As we got to her stall, I told her that I wanted to purchase a drink and went to the closest patty stop to purchase a boxed drink. The journey to and from her stall, including the wait time in the shop, was approximately seven minutes, however, by the time I got back to the stall, Charmaine was lying on the sidewalk beside her stall with several persons around her. In my time away, she had an asthma attack, and though her friends were trying to help her by providing her with her asthma pump, that was not helping. There was panic in our immediate surroundings with shouts of "call the ambulance or police," but no one could get any response from these entities. Higglers around her reached out to one of her family members close by but the family member responded saying that she could not leave her stall. Instead, what they had to do was to charter a handcart operator and paid him JMD$200[61] to take her back to the hospital where I met her initially. Now imagine this, a handcart being used as an ambulance. Let that sink in. The process of moving Charmaine from the sidewalk to the handcart was quite telling. She was assisted by two women unto the cart. Two women. And, while they were leaving, that is one of her friends, the handcart operator and Charmaine, her friend looked at me and asked me to follow them. At first, I was surprised that she asked me but did not hesitate and accompanied them back to the hospital.

As we walked briskly to the hospital, the image of the woman on the handcart, just laying there, with one of her rags over her face, became stuck in my head. On the handcart laid a woman in a multi-colored dress and sandals on her feet. On the handcart laid a Black working-

[61] $200 Jamaican dollars.

class woman in a multi-colored dress and sandals on her feet. Every stall that we passed, someone asked, "a who dat?"[62] or "wah happen to har?"[63] and her friend repeatedly answered, "shi have an asthma attack." When we got back to the hospital, initially, I was not allowed in the emergency room as only one "visitor" was admitted. So, I waited for them. About twenty-five minutes passed, then Charmaine's friend came out of the hospital and asked me to stay with Charmaine while she went back into the town area. We went back into the ER and found Charmaine in a wheelchair as she stated that she could not stand nor walk on her own during that time. When it was her turn to see the doctor, I had to push her wheelchair into the doctor's office. However, what came next, showed me one side of how Black women from lower-class backgrounds, who are seen as the Other, are treated.

Charmaine was admitted to see a male doctor, and when he asked her what was wrong, she expressed that she had an asthma attack and that she had been to the hospital earlier that day for the same reason. However, the doctor stated that she was lying as he had been the doctor on duty all day, and he had not seen her. Furthermore, he insisted that nothing further was wrong with her and that the medication that she had was okay. His dismissive attitude towards her health concern and his demeanor towards her in general, all had the characteristics of a traditional belief on how women who are from disenfranchised communities generally and labeled as Skettels specifically, are treated. It was further indicative of the capitalist patriarchal society of Jamaica where Black women are treated as inferior beings, and therefore our concerns and experiences are often dismissed. We spent less than ten minutes in that room, and when he made no attempts to examine her further, Charmaine stood and left the office. A distant

[62] English: Who is that?
[63] English: What happened to her?

individual might say, well, if she was able to stand and leave, then she did not need that wheelchair in the beginning. However, what I saw was a woman who was aware of her position in society, the ridicule, and ostracization that comes with that position, who negotiated her response to the patriarchal system and who was not willing to sit and be told that she was lying. Here, I saw *survival at work*. For her, I have respect.

CONCLUSION

I started this research hoping to understand how Black women in Kingston, Jamaica, who have been labeled as Skettels, interpret and respond to this label and examine how societal elements such as race, class, and gender influence how this label is interpreted, understood and reproduced. What I learned was more, and it challenged my frame of thinking. This research started on the idea that the label of the Skettel is a racialized, gendered, and classed construct used by the dominant Jamaican society to exercise the politics of control, containment, and exclusion through the apparatus of respectability. Within this context, respectability itself is a racialized, classed, and gendered ideology that is socially constructed and therefore not rigid but fashioned by historical, political, and cultural contexts. As the characteristics of respectability are normalized within the society, then 'deviant' bodies are at risk of being labeled as Other through the use of labels such as the Skettel. When used by dominant narratives, what this label does is police the bodies of the Black working class and poor women and limit their forms of expression, particularly those that do not conform to middle-class notions of respectability.

As such, one of the main points that came out of this research is that the racialized and gendered position of working-class and poor Black women in Kingston influences the experiences that they have and how they respond to systems of power and exclusion. What tends to happen in the cases of women who have been labeled as Skettels, and generally the lived experiences of working-class and poor Black women, is that they engage in an active struggle negotiating respectability and deviance, attending to the politics of respectability and challenging respectability politics. For them, there is no *either or* but a distinct *and* as they navigate a very particular disenfranchising capitalist patriarchal system.

This thesis, therefore, contributes to broader discussions by transnational feminist discourses that underscore that the lives of marginalized women should not and cannot be dichotomized nor homogenized. Instead, systems of power such as patriarchy and capitalism have to be centered in the discussions of Black women's lives to show how society is structured and how Black women navigate these structures. With this in mind, my research challenges the writer, the reader, and the wider society to re-examine the ways we think of Black women's bodies and the desire to place bodies and actions in binaries, as lived experiences are different and cannot be understood without understanding the contexts of the lived experience.

Appendix

Table 1

Table Showing the Main Labor Force Indicators in Jamaica for the period January 2019 to October 2019

Main Labor Force Indicators	January 2019		April 2019		July 2019		October 2019	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Total Population	1,378,100	1,349,600	1,377,900	1,349,600	1,377,900	1,349,500	1,377,800	1,349,400
Population 14 years and older	1,062,800	1,024,300	1,062,600	1,024,200	1,062,600	1,024,200	1,062,500	1,024,100
Labour Force	623,200	717,000	618,500	731,400	624,900	735,900	619,000	726,100
Employed Labour Force	559,200	673,500	553,000	691,500	560,900	693,200	565,600	682, 800
Unemployed Labour Force	64,000	43,500	65,500	39,900	64,000	42,700	53,400	43,300
Outside the Labour Force	439,600	307,300	444,100	292,800	437,700	288,300	443,500	298,000
Unemployment Rate	10.3	6.1	10.6	5.5	10.2	5.8	8.6	6.0
Job Seeking Rate	6.1	4.0	6.7	3.3	6.7	3.9	5.6	3.8
Youth Unemployment Rate	26.5	17.9	25.8	14.5	24.5	16.8	24.7	18.2
Employment to Population Ratio	52.6	65.8	52.0	67.5	52.8	67.7	53.2	66.7

Table 2

Table showing the labor force by occupation group in Jamaica for the period January 2019 to October 2019

Occupation Group	January 2019		April 2019		July 2019		October 2019	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Professionals Senior Officials and Technicians	160,200	109,000	165,800	108,800	165,100	112,500	162,900	109,800
Clerks	75,400	26,300	73,200	27,200	81,200	28,900	88,000	30,700
Service Workers and Shop and Market Sales Workers	202,000	106,000	211,600	115,200	208,000	117,700	202,700	113,100
Skilled Agricultural and Fishery Workers	47,800	143,200	43,500	146,400	43,500	144,900	45,500	146,300
Craft and Related Trades Workers	16,900	153,700	15,800	145,500	15,500	153,900	13,300	145,600
Plant & Machine Operators & Assemblers	5,900	66,400	4,900	70,600	5,100	70,200	3,800	62,500
Elementary Occupations	97,700	99,100	87,100	105,200	89,200	100,400	87,300	101,600
Occupations not Specified	700.0	5,600	1,700	6,100	1,000	4,600	1,000	5,700
Classifiable Labor Force	606,600	709,300	603,600	725,000	608,600	727,100	604,500	715,300
No Previous Occupation	16,600	7,700	14,900	6,400	16,300	8,800	14,500	10,800
Labor Force	623,200	717,000	618,500	731,400	624,900	735,900	619,000	726,100

References

Abu-Lughod, Lila. 1990. “Can There Be A Feminist Ethnography?”. *Women & Performance: a journal of feminist theory*, 5:7-27. 10.1080/07407709008571138.

Alexander, M. Jacqui and Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. 1997. *Feminist genealogies, colonial legacies, democratic futures*. New York: Routledge.

Alexander, M. Jacqui. 1997. “Erotic Autonomy as a Politics of Decolonization.” Pp. 63-100 in *Feminist genealogies, colonial legacies, democratic futures*, edited by M.J. Alexander and C.T. Mohanty. New York: Routledge.

Alexander, M. Jacqui. 1994. “Not just (any) body can be a citizen: The politics of law, sexuality and postcoloniality in Trinidad and Tobago and the Bahamas.” *Feminist Review, 48*(1):5-23. doi:10.1057/fr.1994.39

Allen, Caroline F. 1998. “Caribbean bodies: Representation and practice.” Pp. 276-293 in *Caribbean Portraits: Essays on Gender Ideologies and Identities,* edited by C. Barrow. Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers; University of the West Indies, Mona: Centre for Gender and Development Studies.

Bailey, Carol. 2010. “Performance and the gendered body in Jamaica Kincaid's "girl" and Oonya Kempadoo's buxton spice.” *Meridians: Feminism, Race, Transnationalism, 10*(2):106-123. doi:10.2979/meridians.2010.10.2.106

Bakare-Yusuf, Bibi. 2006. “Fabricating identities: Survival and the imagination in Jamaican dancehall culture.” *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body, & Culture, 10*(4):461-483. doi:10.2752/136270406778664959

Barriteau, V.Eudine. 1998. “Liberal Ideology and Contradictions in Caribbean Gender Systems.” Pp. 276-293 in *Caribbean Portraits: Essays on Gender Ideologies and Identities*, edited by C. Barrow. Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers; University of the West Indies, Mona: Centre for Gender and Development Studies.

Beale, Frances. 1995. “Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female.” Pp. 146-155 in *Words of fire: An anthology of African-American feminist thought*, edited by B. Guy-Sheftall. New York: New Press.

Beckford, George L., and Witter, Michael. 1982. *Small garden-- bitter weed: The political economy of struggle and change in Jamaica*. London, UK;Morant Bay, Jamaica;: Maroon Pub. House.

Bobo, Jacqueline. 1995. *Black women as cultural readers*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Brown, Nadia and Gershon, Sarah Allen. 2017. “Body politics.” *Politics, Groups, and Identities*, 5(1):1-3. doi:10.1080/21565503.2016.1276022

Burnard, Trevor. 2004. *Mastery, tyranny, and desire: Thomas Thistlewood and his slaves in the Anglo-Jamaican world*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Collins, Patricia Hill. 2000. *Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment*. New York: Routledge.

Collins, Patricia Hill. 2004. *Black sexual politics: African Americans, gender, and the new racism*. New York: Routledge.

Cooper, Carolyn. 2004. *Sound clash: Jamaican dancehall culture at large*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Cooper, Carolyn. 2017, December 3. "Carolyn Cooper: Up in arms over Lisa Hanna's dress." *The Gleaner* Retrieved from http://jamaica-gleaner.com/article/commentary/20171203/carolyn-cooper-arms-over-lisa-hannas-dress

Deere, Carmen D. and Antrobus, Peggy. 1990. *In the shadows of the sun: Caribbean development alternatives and U.S. policy*. Boulder: Westview Press

Dennis-Benn, Nicole. 2018. "Unapologetic." Pp. 17-30 in *Can We All Be Feminists? New Writing from Brit Bennett, Nicole Dennis-Benn, and 15 Others on Intersectionality, Identity, and the Way Forward for Feminism,* edited by J. Eric-Udorie. New York: Penguin Books

Durham, Aisha. 2014. *At Home with Hip Hop Feminism: Performances in Communication and Culture*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing Group.

Edmondson, Belinda. 1999. *Caribbean romances: The politics of regional representation*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia.

Edmondson, Belinda. 2003. “Public spectacles: Caribbean women and the politics of public performance.” *Small Axe (Indiana Univ., Bloomington), 13*(1):1-16. doi:10.2979/SAX.2003.-.13.1

Eisenstein, Zillah. 1996. *Hatreds: Racialized and sexualized conflicts in the 21st century*. New York: Routledge.

Eisenstein, Zillah. 2004. *Against empire: Feminisms, racism, and the west*. London; New York; Melbourne: Zed Books.

Enloe, Cynthia. 2014. “Gender Makes the World Go Round: Where Are the Women?” Pp.1-36 *in Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*. University of California Press.

Forde, Maarit. 2019. “Respectable families and the body politic.” *Suomen Antropologi: Journal of the Finnish Anthropological Society, 43*(4):48-54.

Gosovic, Branislav. 2000. “Intellectual Hegemony in the Context of Globalisation.” Pp. 1-7 in *Globalisation, a calculus of inequality: Perspectives from the South*, edited in D.Benn & K.O. Hall. Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers.

Green, Cecilia. 2006. Between respectability and self-respect: Framing Afro-Caribbean women's labour history. *Social and Economic Studies, 55*(3), 1-31.

Green, Cecilia. 1995. “Gender, race and class in the social economy of the English-speaking Caribbean.” *Social and Economic Studies, 44*(2/3):65-102.

Hammonds, Evelynn. 1997. “Toward a Genealogy of Black Female Sexuality: The Problematic - of Silence.” Pp.170-182 in *Feminist genealogies, colonial legacies, democratic futures,* edited by M. J. Alexander, & C. T. Mohanty. New York: Routledge.

Harris-Perry, Melissa. 2011. *Sister citizen: Shame, stereotypes, and black women in America*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Higginbotham, Evelyn. 1993. *Righteous discontent: the women's movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Hoogvelt, Ankie. M. 1997. *Globalization and the postcolonial world: The new political economy of development*. Baltimore, Md: Johns Hopkins University Press.

hooks, bell. 1992. *Black looks: Race and representation*. Boston, MA: South End Press.

hooks, bell. 1981. *Ain't I a woman: Black women and feminism* ([Second]. ed.). New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

Jalée, Pierre. 1977. *How capitalism works*. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Jordan-Zachery, Julia. 2017. *Shadow Bodies: Black Women, Ideology, Representation, and Politics*. New Brunswick, Camden, Newark, New Jersey; London: Rutgers University Press.

Kempadoo, Kamala. 2004. *Sexing the Caribbean: Gender, race, and sexual labor*. New York: Routledge. doi:10.4324/9780203338087

Kincaid, Jamaica. 1983. *At the bottom of the river*. New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux.

Marshall, Annecka. 1994. “Sensuous Sapphires: A Study of the Social Construction of Black Female Sexuality.” Pp. 106-124 in R*esearching women's lives from a feminist perspective,* edited by M. Maynard, and J. Purvis, London;Bristol, PA;: Taylor & Francis.

McFadden, Patricia. 2005. “Becoming postcolonial: African women changing the meaning of citizenship.” *Meridians, 6*(1):1-22. doi:10.1353/mer.2005.0030

Mgadmi, Mahessen. 2009. “Black women's identity: Stereotypes, respectability and passionlessness (1890-1930).” *Revue LISA/LISA e-Journal, 7*(1):40.

Mohammed, Patricia. 1994. “Nuancing the feminist discourse in the Caribbean.” *Social and Economic Studies, 43*(3):135-167.

Mohammed, Patricia. 2000. “'But most of all mi love me browning': The Emergence in Eighteenth and Nineteenth-century Jamaica of the Mulatto Woman as the Desired.” *Feminist Review, 65*(65):22-48.

Mohammed, Patricia. 2002. *Gendered realities: Essays in Caribbean feminist thought*. Mona, Jamaica; Barbados: University of the West Indies Press.

Mohammed, Patricia. 2004. “Unmasking Masculinity and Deconstructing Patriarchy: Problems and Possibilities within Feminist Epistemologies.” Pp. 38-67 in *Interrogating Caribbean masculinities: Theoretical and empirical analyses*, edited by R. Reddock. Kingston, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press.

Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. 2013. “Transnational feminist crossings: On neoliberalism and radical critique.” *Signs, 38*(4):967-991.

Nettleford, Rex. 2005, October 9. “The male of the species 'Endangered' or 'Extinct'.” *The Gleaner*. Retrieved from http:// old.jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20051009/cleisure/cleisure3.html

Njoku, Nadrea and Patton, Lori. 2017. “Explorations of Respectability and Resistance in Constructions of Black Womanhood at HBCUs.” Pp. 143-157 in *Critical Perspectives on Black Women and College Success,* edited by L.D. Patton and N.N. Croom. New York: Routledge

Noel, Keith. 1969, December 31. “Powerful Women.” *The Gleaner*. Retrieved from http://jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20101104/cleisure/cleisure2.html

Pattullo, Polly. 1996. *Last resorts: The cost of tourism in the Caribbean*. Kingston: Ian Randle.

Reddock, Rhoda. 1985. “Women and slavery in the Caribbean: A feminist perspective.” *Latin American Perspectives, 12*(1):63-80. doi:10.1177/0094582X8501200104

Sassen, Saskia. 1998. *Globalization and its discontents*. New York: The New Press.

Statistical Institute of Jamaica. 2019. Main Labour Force Indicators. Retrieved from https://statinja.gov.jm/LabourForce/NewLFS.aspx

Statistical Institute of Jamaica. 2019. Employed Labour Force by Occupation Group. Retrieved from https://statinja.gov.jm/LabourForce/NewLFS.aspx

Tafari- Ama, Imani. 2017. *Blood, Bullets and Bodies: Sexual Politics Below Jamaica’s Poverty Line*. Lancashire: Beaten Track Publishing.

Vita

Chivonne Munroe was born and raised in Jamaica. She received her Bachelor of Science in Psychology at the University of the West Indies, Mona in Kingston, Jamaica. She is currently pursuing her Master of Arts in Pan African Studies at Syracuse University.