A Critical Analysis of Heteronormative Discourses on Gender and Sexuality in the Jamaican Rock Music Scene

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NADIA WHITEMAN-CHARLES

University of the West Indies

nadiawhiteman@yahoo.com

Abstract

Historically, Jamaican culture has been positioned at odds with the development of LGBTQ rights. Though the locale has been making steps towards accepting different groups, its stalwart history of heterotypical male and female roles is still ingrained in the AfroCaribbean psyche. This paper provides a critical analysis of the construction of the homophobic and misogynistic discourses within the Jamaican rock music scene. Despite attempts to embrace cultural differences, members consistently adopted heterophobias towards gay men and women. Within the scene's everyday discourse, women's bodies were constantly objectified. Additionally, gay men remained simultaneously invisible and subjugated by hypermasculine anxieties. The collective philosophy of the scene suggested that the community was a safe haven from mainstream prejudices. However, this philosophy was an act of dark play which hid the group's biases.

Key words: *Jamaica, heterophobias, hypermasculinity, safe space, dark play, rock music scene*

1. Introduction

Dancehall and reggae have traditionally been used by Black, lower class youth in urban centres in Jamaica to express their social hardships (Hope, 2006; Cooper, 2004). These mediums gave voice to economic oppression, racisms and the injustices of colonial rule. Rock music does not have this intimate connection to Jamaica's postcolonial culture. Consequently, the rock music scene in Jamaica lay outside of the popular domain in the local alternative music community. This faction held local rock, rap/ hip hop and jazz which were not consumed by mainstream Jamaica. Popular tastes were aligned with reggae and dancehall.

There was heavy criticism for the local production of rock music as the public believed that it was not indigenous to the Jamaican Black experience and was a symbol of European and American imperialism. A strong believer in the importance of Jamaicans producing "their own" music was Michael "Ibo" Cooper, past member of the reggae band Third World and past president of the Jamaica Reggae Industry Association. He likened Jamaica's interest in rock music as the result of media imperialism:

> *Uptown kids live in a virtual lifestyle. They were never a part of Jamaican society. … In many ways, their class does not relate to our culture easy. Then came the expansion of media and communications and everybody started to get cable and internet. In the digital communication age, the United States has an amazing jack, of cultural imperialism.* (Interview with Ibo Cooper, 2013)

At the time of this study, there was a superficial acknowledgement in the popular domain of rock music's contribution to roots reggae with many participants citing Bob Marley's lead guitar style as evidence of the merger between rock and reggae in Jamaica. In truth, this blend substantiated claims of the hybridization of Caribbean music (Dawes, 1999; Guilbault & Rommen, 2019). However, reggae and dancehall, in the mind of mainstream Jamaica, remain Black systems of resistance against colonialism and rock music lingers as an uneasy symbol of Western imperialism:

> It is not difficult to imagine reggae suffering the same fate as the delta blues – co-opted by commercial popular music, its roots insidiously and inevitable gnawed away, and its greatest practitioners lured away from the source of their inspiration. The separation of artistic ability and emotional depth is always a cultural tragedy. (Chang O'Brien & Chen, 1998, p.7)

My analysis of the Jamaican rock music scene investigates data derived from 2013 to 2015 from participant observation, interviews and a WhatsApp group chat "Rock in Ja". Members of the rock scene used the phrase "safe" to allude to the scene as tolerant of difference and not subject to the wider prejudices of the Jamaican community's "heterophobias" (Cooper, 2004, pp. 25-26). Despite this sentiment, the scene did more to maintain heterophobias than overthrow them. "Rock in Ja's" conversations specifically betrayed the group's discursive subjugation of women and gay men. This paper highlights the ways the rock scene utilized dark play to reaffirm Jamaican hypermasculinity and heteronormativity.

To anchor my analysis on the effects of the heteronormative discourses within the rock music scene, Hope's (2010) work on the performance of masculinities in dancehall culture is applied to the politics of gender and sexuality in the rock scene. Her perspectives substantiate claims made here that members of the rock scene reflect the hypermasculine attitudes of dancehall culture. Additionally, the concept "dark play" is used to characterize the rock scene's safe-haven philosophy as an artifice which hid the faction's allegiance to mainstream heteronormative agendas which subjugated women and gay men.

2. Methodology

My critical ethnographic inquiry utilised participant observation, interviews and critical comparative discourse analysis (CCDA) to extract the subjective experiences of participants. In this light, the researcher and her participants both synthesised the symbolic materials of everyday life to make meaning of social experiences (Rock, 2007; Madison, 2005; van Loon, 2007). This

methodology advocates the liberation of oppressed groups from the hegemonic constraints of social institutions (Madison, 2005, p. 6; Shields, 2012).

This work's adoption of a critical approach mirrors many critical scholars' intention to empower individuals (Jones, 2018; Farrelly, 2019) as "[t]he critical aesthetic operates as a "mood" or disposition through which the citizen-as–critic might negotiate the manufacturings of culture, and then, most importantly, be in a position to write back" (Hickey, 2012, p. 170). Madison (2005) also contends that "critical ethnography is always a meeting of multiple sides in an encounter with and among Other(s), one in which there is negotiation and dialogue toward substantial and viable meanings that make a difference in the Other's world" (p. 9). A core motivation of this paper is to underline the heteronormative imbalances in power within Jamaican society. Additionally, this work has sought to represent the voices of a hidden group in Jamaica: the rock music scene. As Madison (2005) stresses, the critical ethnographer:

> takes us beneath the surface appearances, disrupts the status quo, and unsettles both neutrality and taken-for-granted assumptions by bringing to light underlying and obscure operations of power and control. Therefore the critical ethnographer resists domestication and moves from "what is" to "what could be" (p. 5)

I participated in the social activities of the Jamaican rock music scenes at bars, house parties and various other music sites between August 2013 and October 2015. I interviewed sixty-one music professionals and 100 audience members throughout my fieldwork. Additionally, the interaction within the WhatsApp group "Rock in Ja" was observed specifically between June to October 2015. Subsequently, the field sites of this research are both physical and virtual. This paper draws heavily from the WhatsApp conversation with support from various interviews and fieldnotes.

To bolster my critical analysis, I employed Victor Turner's (1982) comparative symbology. On a structural level, it is quite easy to theorize consumer choices as connected to particular social types and the struggle between opposing classes. However, unlike Bourdieu's work in *La distinction: critique sociale du jugement* (1979) where he charts symbols of class and essentialises its meaning in connection to a person's social disposition, Turner's comparative symbology of the communitas uncovers ambiguities and contradictions in the lived production and consumption of culture. Consequently, I have labelled my analytical approach as critical comparative discourse analysis (CCDA).

Turner's (1982) analysis of the rituals of social life as subject to changes in status is key to this work. My participants' status as Jamaicans as well as fringe dwellers as they belonged to the local rock music scene provided competing perceptions of the social world. My analysis underlines the inconsistencies and changes in heternormative distinctions within the group. Turner (1982) aptly says,

> [w]hen symbols are rigidified, by some of our modern investigators, those of us who take them too seriously become blind to the creative

> and innovative potential of symbols as factors in human action. Symbols may "instigate" such action and in situationally varying combinations channel its direction by saturating goals and means with affect and desire. Comparative symbology does attempt to preserve this ludic capacity, to catch symbols in their movement, so to speak, and to "play" with their possibilities of form and meaning. It does this by contextualising symbols in the concrete, historical fields of their use by "men alive" as they act, react, transact and interact socially. (p. 23)

The WhatsApp group was started by Vernon Da Costa (a member of the Jamaican pop rock band Robot Taxi) in May 2015. The group held 25 members excluding myself who lived inside and outside of Jamaica with twenty (20) active members in the cyber chat. These individuals were between the ages of 19 and 40. On average, eight to ten persons would engage in commentary per day. The group's activities allowed for a deeper interrogation into the members' dispositions. WhatsApp was used as an inexpensive meeting place where individuals could stay connected to each other, talk about their interests and relay their frustrations.

With the signing of the consent forms, my participants provided carte blanche to utilise their words in my research. However, though many were confident and untroubled with their viewpoints, I felt uneasy publishing real names to opinions which may not be perceived as politically correct. This may result in these individuals facing public recriminations. Therefore, to protect these participants from condemnation about their misogynistic, and homophobic thoughts, I have employed pseudonyms. Additionally, I have attached aliases to contributors who observe queer identities and hypersexual tastes to shield them from local censure which is grounded in Victorian morality. Research methodologist van den Hoonaard (2003) explains that ethnographic fieldwork exhibits the least amount of anonymity by the very nature of its methods of data collection. He believes the only remedies to procure anonymity are participants' consent to use their names or conducting covert research. Others have disagreed with this perspective. Jerolmack and Murphy (2017) suggest that there are varying degrees of masking a researcher can choose to protect participants' identities in ethnographic research. Simultaneously, they posit that it should not be accepted as the default option for all contributors to a work. As a Caribbean citizen and critical researcher, I believe that I am my brother's keeper and I have a responsibility to safeguard my contributors. Despite consent, I am aware of the damage certain views can have on their family life and career. Hence, this paper's careful implementation of pseudonyms.

CCDA was used to codify the experiences of the Jamaican rock music scene's WhatsApp group texts and research interviews. The comparative themes in the data analysis were labelled with discursive and symbolic codes. Discursive codes were viewed as the conversational data which used Standard English or Jamaican Creole to articulate participants' pain points. For instance, some of the discursive codes for the theme hustla were "feeling cheated", "success" and "hustle", while some of the discursive codes for the theme fringe-dwellers were "weird", "different", "foreign" and "copying" or "imitate". Symbolic codes were the sexualized images, videos, GIFs, memes

and audio clips which were used simultaneously with, or independent of, discursive codes.

It is important to note that the context of each conversation and interview had to be explicitly catalogued in Microsoft Excel before their allocation to discursive or symbolic codes. On average, the codes and/or combined codes with their comparative themes had to appear no less than twenty (20) times in WhatsApp group chat and six (6) times in 30-minute to 1-hour interviews to be labelled a legitimate comparative theme. My CCDA took approximately nine (9) months.

There were instances where codes signified multiple comparative themes. As a result, a codebook was created during the analytical process. It provided a clear understanding of the context of interview responses, WhatsApp conversations and definitions of codes. Compiling the codebook was an ongoing process throughout the period of analysis. This qualitative strategy inserted rigour and reliability in the analytic process and ensured the consistent agreement amongst the definition of codes and comparative themes. Even with the codebook, discursive and symbolic codes overlapped. This overlap underlined the importance of certain codes over others and allowed me to prioritize specific comparative themes. Though I initially unearthed thirty themes, the majority of these became subthemes or codes which yielded five (5) major themes in the end.

One of these major comparative themes was the "safe place". The rock music scene was consistently described as a "safe place" by its members. For example, Vernon commented in an interview on a popular bar in the scene, likening it to a "church" -

> *Tony's is my church. Remember I told you music was my drug. Well it's my religion now. You know how people go to church every Sunday? Well I'm usually at Tony's every Thursday.* (Interview with Vernon, 34 years old, member of Robot Taxi, 2014)

As a safe haven, the scene was a refuge from the prejudicial discourses on music, gender and homosexuality which were found in mainstream Jamaica. It allowed the scene members to practice their hypercosmopolitanism and stray from Black nationalist tastes. However, the ambiguity of the rock group's social status ensured that discourses within the scene were not divorced from mainstream ideologies. I used Richard Schechner's (1988) "dark play" to emphasize the unconscious expressions of tolerance and intolerance to gender and sexual identities within the rock group. Thus, the community's belief that the rock scene was a safe haven was untrue. The dark logic of the "safe place" was a "moment" of communitas.

3. Homophobia in Jamaica

3.1 Lesbians in, Gay Men Out!

The rock community's perceived acceptance of the Other's differences was one of the reasons same-sex female relationships were openly acknowledged in the scene. Melissa described the ease with which she and her girlfriend felt

"safer in this area than any other area". The "areas" where Melissa did not feel safe were the reggae, dancehall, familial, school and workspaces. She explained:

> *I think because the rock scene welcomes everybody. Not like any other scene in Jamaica, the culture does not want LGBT people because they believe in family procreation and they see that man and man can't have pickney. Downtown does not believe in the LGBT community cuz they believe the whole thing that a man and a man sleeping together not supposed to be like the bible stated. A lot of people live by the bible in this country. The rock is more open because the rock scene is made up of people who have been through shit, has to fight for what they believe in and just don't give a fuck. And that is the reason as to why I feel safe when I come to the rock scene. My girlfriend is a big rocker even though she is studying to be a lawyer… We feel more safer in this area than any other area.* (Interview with Melissa, 19-year-old student, 2013)

Though less visible in the social sphere, that did not make the lesbian any less of a threat (Hart, 2003, p. 70). Jamaican heteronormative discourses cloak "the lesbian" as a usurper of masculine privilege. Yet, gay men were more visible in the social arena because they represented a bigger threat to the heterosexual community (Hart, 2003) – the progressive feminisation of all men. On July 4th 2014, WhatsApp group member Bobby suggested that David Bowie's and Queen's music video for the song "Under Pressure" had "sooo much gay in one video". With no regard for Bowie's or the band's true sexual orientation, the group began a debate on the appropriateness of assigning the label "gay" to the video's performance. Dominique's response to his comment was to counsel members to accept differences:

> 15:38 – Dominique: You are silly to think being gay makes u weird
> 15:38 – Wyatt: I wasn't talking bout gay. I was talking about siiick shit. Gay is par for the course in the music biz
> 15:39 – Dominique: What has Bowie done that is sick? My bad for the mixup
> 15:39 – Wyatt: I leave you to look it up
> 15:39 – Bobby: I have never been a fan of cross-dressing. So
> 15:39 – Dominique: Really. That is why
> 15:39 – Bobby: That's one
> 15:39 – Wyatt: I didn't give a fuck about what he wore. The music shot
> 15:40 – Dominique: I agree
> 15:40 – Jennifer: Like Luther
> 15:40 – Dominique: What has Freddie done that is weird
> 15:40 – Jennifer: Lol
> …
> 15:41 – Bobby: Same way you can't see pass the assholeness
> …
> 15:42 – Bobby: I can't see pass a man in a dress
> …

> 15:43 – Dominique: Bobby I wish u a gay son with light skin and blue eyes who only like Swedish girls
> 15:43 – Wyatt: Yikes
> 15:43 – Jennifer: Oh dear…
> 15:44 – Bobby: If I have a gay son I'll love him with all my heart
> …
> 15:44 – Bobby: Doesn't change the fact that as a red-blooded male … I don't like men in dresses ("Rock in Ja", WhatsApp Group Chat)

The group insinuated that the act of cross-dressing was a homosexual performance. Jennifer supported Bobby's reasoning but stressed that she kept her opinions to herself. She reasoned as well that everyone was entitled to their own opinion. Dominique countered by saying that Jennifer should then accept when she was judged by others and labelled "weird" for being a part of the rock scene. Bobby however felt that he was in no way bashing cross-dressers or homosexuals as he had a right to state if he did not like something. In this case, he did not like to see men dressed in women's garments. In referencing Bobby's anxieties about the video, though he denied that his dislike had anything to do with Bowie being a "homosexual", other comments made about the feminisation of male clothing and gay relationships suggested otherwise.

Male-male relationships were not visible at rock music gatherings online or offline, so it was difficult to understand how gay men felt in these "safe zones" or how their presence was dealt with. The invisibility of gay men credits Skeggs' (2004) assessment that homosexuals have learnt to "deploy ambiguity" to resist repressive conventions in society and remain unrecognizable (p. 26). In the group chat, being "too emotional" by expressing one's feelings or complaining were also deemed feminised traits homosexuals assumed. These assumptions validate Hart's (2003) and Phelan's (1997) position that homosexuals are recognized as men who perform feminine acts. These attitudes are aligned with Hope's (2006) assumptions that in the dancehall space "many Jamaican men identify and negotiate their masculine identity status through their sexuality and their seeming dominance of and power over the Other, that is, woman" (p. 79).

Dark play is described by Schechner (1988) as the unconscious restoration of social rules and behaviours through physical or discursive performances. The fact that individuals are unaware of their allegiances to mainstream's gender scripts is a key characteristic of dark play (pp. 12-14). Turner (1982) identifies that the ritual of play does not simply project a recreation of norms as play acts also reflect the expectations of Structure. The safe place philosophy, as an act of dark play, brought the rock scene closer together as well as nearer to mainstream directives. Many insist that dark play hides the reality of social regulations which organise our everyday interactions in groups (Schechner, 1988, pp. 12-14; Linderoth and Mortensen, 2015; Johnson, 2019). Consequently, the rock scene was a danger zone for gay men:

> *To be friends with a homosexual woman carries societally different standards than being friends with a man. I personally feel that I have no feelings on it. I don't really care what a man do. As long as he is able to confront it, state it openly, and plainly and have the*

> *balls to back it up. Cuz then I will support you. What I can't stand about them battyman down here so is that instead of trying to socialize as a human being, as a man, even with the societal stance that not everyman will be the same. Can talk like… you know move a certain way, but don't be grinding things for the roadside. But I mean there are some faggots … I don't believe all homosexuals should die just generally so but it have some battybwoy out these wey they robbing people, they raping pickney and I not joking. These are people that I drive past and see the shit that them going on with. …no woman nah go on so. The things these men [gay prostitutes] are saying, the way they behaving on the open road its beyond past all things rationally disgusting. You can't justify that.* (Interview with G., a photographer, 2013)

Homophobic discourses in Jamaica fixate on male-male sex acts (Hope, 2010, pp. 70-71). The threat to masculine power was the stereotypical portrayal of same-sex rape and the effeminate representation of homosexuals (Lewis, 2005, pp. 16-17; Chevannes, 2001, p. 144). G. felt that these two actions made homosexual men the villain. However, lesbians did not threaten his masculine power as well as gay men who mimed heterosexual antics. Effeminate gay men, cross dressers and men who raped other men delegitimised hegemonic masculinity. Anxieties about these acts upheld deeply ingrained biases about homosexuals in the rock scene and the wider society.

The "acceptance" of lesbianism within the rock group seemingly inverted heteronormative dogma. However, Hope (2006) accedes that females are objectified in the dancehall space as a text for male viewing pleasure. Male participants in the rock group expressed that thinking about or seeing two females intimately engaged fulfilled a "redblooded" (heterosexual) male fantasy. This fantasy is described by Hope (2006) as the courting and conquering of the punaany (vagina) (pp. 48-52):

> *Here's what, the definition of a friend … you don't really look to fuck your friends. Cuz when you fuck your friends, your friends usually feel fucked. You understand me. That's not a good way to go about life. So don't fuck your friends. And it's a hell of a thing for a man, any man to be programmed … like as God programmed you. Breeze blow when I was 12 years old and my dudus (penis) get hmmm. … Now I understand when people say man and woman cyah be friends. But if you can try it and you can achieve it, is a hell of a closeness you get. I will be friends with a woman and make her know I not looking at your vagina … Having said that men fuck their female friends. That's life.* (Interview with G., photographer, 2013)

During another conversation in the group a male participant conveyed outrage when an unknown man mistook him for a female and made sexual advances. On June 28th he shared a screen grab of this conversation and his annoyance in the chat:

> 5:55 – Leon: Hi am Leon

6:15 – Sian: Ok
6:15 – Sian: And?
6:18 – Leon: Wish I cud know u, and ___
6:19 – Sian: Ok
6:19 – Sian: I'm gonna go now cuz idk [I don't know] u u not making sense
6:19 – Sian: Have a good sunday
6:20 – Leon: Where u from?
...
6:25 – Leon: I would hv [have] a good sunday eating u [emoji]
6:32 – Sian: Who is this?
6:32 – Sian: U know me, I don't know u
6:32 – Sian: State name and rank or b blocked
6:37 – Leon: I still wud link u. N rank, love women bad
6:38 – Leon: Ur number is in a phn I got
6:40 – Sian: A phone you got?
6:40 – Sian: Ok, so yu want to eat my dick?
6:40 – Sian: [emoji]
6:40 – Sian: Big up urself creep
6:42 – Leon: Ok so ur a shim. Cz that's a woman name
6:43 – Sian: [Voice Note]
6:44 – Sian: [Voice Note]
6:48 – Sian: Also I am going 2 put this on Facebook with ur name and number
6:48 – Sian: [emoji] ("Rock in Ja", WhatsApp Group Chat)

The female response to Sian's victimisation was self-satisfaction, "ROTFL!!! [Rolling on the floor laughing] Now you know the shit we go thru, and mock sympathy", "Yup. Lol poor ting him desperate". Sian's and his opponent's outrage substantiate claims that gay social performances were understood as the feminisation of men by Jamaicans. Sian's name became a point of contention as the man thought he was propositioning a female. His response to this error was to ridicule Sian by calling him a "shim" (She/Him). Sian retaliated by disclosing that he would post the conversation on Facebook with the man's name and number visible so that anyone who knows him will know that he tried to proposition a man. Both actions were intended to shame and do irreparable harm to each man's heterosexual identity (Lewis, 2005, pp. 16-17; Chevannes, 2001, p. 194). Hart (2003) posits that the correct terminology for the negativity assigned to the LGBT is "displaced response":

> For the object under attack by the homophobe is the presumed stability of his/her own identity ... [P]olicing the boundaries of the body is forcefully instituted by the naturalisation of heterosexuality. Homophobia might be more broadly understood as a diffuse and pervasive mechanism that reacts to the adulteration of all binary constructions which reinscribe sameness by positing oppositional differences. (p. 70)

3.2 A Space for the Queer Performance

Alternative lover's rock musician Kat C.H.R. (Kat) was quite open about her sexuality as she explained that she was featured in Curve magazine on the 26th April 2013 as the only "out" Jamaican artiste. In our interview on 17th October 2013, she stated that her sexuality had never limited her progress in the music industry but she did recount the single time she was disrespected by an audience member. While Kat was setting up to perform at Christopher's (a local bar), one female customer, who was quite drunk, protested against her presence. Even though it was one customer, Kat was asked to leave by the manager. She explained that she never performed there again. Kat remembered the woman kept saying "keep that in your yard", referring to her attraction to the same sex. I was quite perplexed that one customer could cause her dismissal, but Kat explained quite stoically that in Jamaica, a paying customer would never be ignored for a rocker who was also a lesbian.

Despite the dancehall, reggae and rock music scenes' rejection of gay men, there was a music space in Jamaica that welcomed queer performances. Jamaican soca parties permitted same-sex dance couples. Soca music is a popular art form in the Caribbean. Originating from Trinidad and Tobago, it descended from a mixture of calypso and chutney music and is the soundtrack to all Carnival events in the Caribbean. I attended the Kingston soca party "Mas Camp" in February 2015 where male dance partners made up the revelry in the audience. Male and female dance partners swayed next to these same-sex duos of both genders; there was no hiding, no camouflage. Wining and other intimate contact were a part of the male-male performances. This signaled to me that the soca space was a much safer enclave as men chose to openly engage in queer rituals unlike at rock, dancehall and reggae events.

Hope (2010) describes class as central to the Jamaican social strata. As such, "a homosexual from the middle or upper-classes is allowed freer rein to breach the patriarchal norms of masculine behaviour" (p. 74) than his compatriot in the lower classes. However, within the rock music space this assumption does not prove true. The rock community was a site for the upper and middle classes but gay men were not visible or accepted within its borders. Soca events were also a playground for the elite but seemed to encourage atypical male-male interaction. Consequently, the queer performance is a complicated social construction that cannot be understood solely through class dynamics.

What made soca events safer than the rock or dancehall music scene? It was explained by attendees I questioned at the Mas Camp event that Trinidad and Tobago's Carnival is perceived by mainstream Jamaica as a facilitator of queer practices. Soca music is indigenous to Trinidad and Tobago and is the music of its Carnival festivities. The media coverage of Trinidad and Tobago's Carnival highlighted same-sex dance partners in its street parades. The Jamaican audience assumed that meant that the queer performance was a central part of the event. As a consequence, individuals with aggressive anti-homosexual stances did not attend soca parties. Gay men felt more secure to touch, dance and walk close to one another without the presence of the admonishing public.

Homophobia in the mainstream stressed the "unnaturalness" of homosexuality, the angst to maintain the purity and authenticity of Black hypermasculine stereotype, the reaction to protect the young from an atypical lifestyle and a belief in the illegality of homosexuality (Hope, 2010, p. 75). The rock scene adopted these ideas as well as the fear of male-on-male rape and the feminization of men. Though a number of scene goers were not homophobic, mainstream social anxieties still motivated the repression of homosexuality at conventional social sites like dancehall parties and rock music events.

Foucault (1978) posits that certain discourses on sex and sexuality were privileged while others were not in the 17th century to the early 20th century European society. Heterosexual marriage and family life were the scripts prescribed by convention. Discourses on unconventional sexualities like homosexuality and bisexuality, though ignored and silenced, still existed (pp. 18-22). Foucault (1978) did not see contemporary society as having strayed far from this repression. As a colonial subject to Europe, Jamaica is not exempt from the repressive hold on "Other" sexualities. Hope (2010) explains that Jamaican homophobia "is arguably a radical and extreme variant of Jamaican masculine paranoia of the feminine … [M]ale homosexuals are deemed gender traitors who violate the accepted rules of gender identity and/or gender performance" (p. 69). Jamaican masculinity represented a constant display of heteronormativity in the rock scene. Males who performed the opposite undermined the power of the Jamaican identity. Women were designated objects of male desire while gay men were a constant threat to masculine power.

4. Jamaican Gender Norms

Though the rock scene was regarded as a safe haven, it did not offer women much respite from the sexual advances of men. After a house party in 2014, I was present during a conversation where a rock participant commented that he was quite annoyed that a male friend was "taking advantage" of a female friend while she was intoxicated. Many echoed this sentiment and suggested that this was not the first time something like this had occurred. Various individuals expressed that they knew the would-be assailant was lonely at times and was in pursuit of female companionship. Others suggested that the female in question was generally quite irresponsible when intoxicated and should take better care of her person especially since Jamaican women were "not always safe". However, the conversation faded into other topics as quickly as it began.

Taking an Anglo-Caribbean perspective, Lewis (2005) explains that issues like homosexuality unsettle the Caribbean's norms about masculinity (pp. 9-10). Men are taught their social position by institutions and masculinity is constructed in opposition to femininity (Chevannes, 2001; Lewis, 2005). More than instructing men on how to behave towards other men, hegemonic masculinity dictates how to earn a woman's respect through dominance. Perceptions about men and women are tied to social expectations, "a forcible citation of a norm, one whose complex historicity is indissociable from relations of discipline, regulation, punishment" (Butler, 2003, p. 157).

Similar to Lewis' (2005) perspective, Hope (2010) positions Afro-Jamaican masculinity as a middle-class construction of post-independent Jamaica. The performance of hegemonic masculinity in the dancehall space encourages a tolerance of male promiscuity. In fact, she maintains that "to become and remain a man requires certain kinds of relationships with women, of which sexual intercourse and sexual initiative is primary" (p. 17). Polygamous heterosexuality is the result and its practice, more than exacting casual sexual relationships with women, requires the "courting and/or dominance of female sexuality, femininity and women" (p. 20). Accordingly, because men and women of the rock music scene were programmed to accede to hegemonic masculinity and its tenets, the group became powerless to put an end to the sexual harassment of a female friend. Though his actions were met with disapproval by the group, the perpetrator was never confronted about his actions. In truth, parallel conversations took place about his "bad behaviour" on two other occasions. No matter how distasteful the harassment, female responsibility seemed the underlying moral of each of these encounters.

4.1 The Objectification of Women

A virtual debate on class and race distinctions in Jamaica on the 30th June (2015) was cut short by a comment from one of the male contributors. He posted in the group, "Jennifer is a rapist" and ended by uploading a video of a rubber chicken having sex with a toy pig for twenty-nine seconds. Jennifer was one of the chat's members and the comment was meant as a joke. The replies to this were the emoticon of hands clapping by a male respondent and a female typing two words - "i can't". Unsolicited sexual images were exchanged in numerous conversations between male respondents in the group chat. Women scantily clad, legs wide open and in various erotic positions were a normal sight. Yet men were not cautioned against disrupting the WhatsApp group space with these images or advised to carry out conversations via their personal accounts. Female members mostly remained silent during these exchanges and there were a few times when they themselves participated in the interchange. On one occasion a complaint was verbalised by a woman in the group after a male member posted a video on July 24th that she felt was offensive to women. She explained that it made her feel inferior. The individual who posted the video sincerely apologised for making her feel that way and explained that it was not his intention. The video was meant as a joke. Nothing more was said about the issue by either party, though another male commented that he did not understand her reaction.

A system of images (and sounds) can articulate a discourse on cultural values. Mulvey (1999) described early 20th century North American films as casting women in the image system of the "looked-at-ness" role. This character satisfied the patriarchal gaze of both male and female audiences. The audience saw male actors as the central protagonists who carried the plot of the story and women were the happy distraction to the storyline. As such, a woman's visual representation was the extent of her importance to the story line (pp. 835-836). More than this, because the audience's gaze as well as the encoders of the film served patriarchal agendas, women were represented in this way to assuage the castration anxiety of men. Consequently, the camera removed the narrative complexity from the female character by focusing on

body parts. The woman became a sexualised object and non-threatening to masculine power. The woman's presence is then related to itself and not reality. However, Lewis (2005) describes the imagery of gender roles as also prejudicial to the man. In the Caribbean, the logic of masculinity positions the man as the epitome of strength:

> Men also seem burdened by the presumption of strength and the expectation to provide protection for their wives, girlfriends and children, irrespective of their own physical endowments or capabilities. This responsibility, which some women expect men to assume, and which many men feel obliged to honor, encourages fearlessness, and forms part of a general tendency of men to embrace risk as a measure of manliness. (p. 12)

Though both gendered identities can be viewed as an imagined construct of society, only the female image within the group was consistently sexualized regardless of the topic being discussed in the chat. These images contributed to the on-going digital voyeurism and imagery of women as objects for male desire. Likewise, women actively objectified themselves in the chat. On June 24th the group began a friendly tit-for-tat about the shape of one of its female member's (Tasha) derriere. A few men communicated their approval of the large size of the woman's bottom. She in turn jokingly responded:

> 18:09 - Probably just is
> 18:09 - I've never understood the awe
> 18:09 - Don't mind it tho lol

Smiling and laughing emoticons were inserted by the conversers. The female in question then proposed to one of the male's respondents (Bill) that she will grant him one date to which he responded:

> 18:25 - One is all I need hunz … not responsible for your behaviour afta dat… dem hafi guh peel yu offa mi (… they will have to peel you off of me)

The young lady utilised an angel face emoticon in response and the young man immediately inserted a devil face symbol followed by:

> 18:27 - Tasha juice a guh flood out Kingston city … lol (Tasha's sexual juices will flood out Kingston)

Tasha then replied, "Me gone. Good bye". The responses to the banter were very telling of the inappropriate turn the conversation had taken:

> 18:28 – Bill: Lolololololol
> 18.28 – Stan: Well
> 18:28 – Bill: Jus cool
> 18:28 – Stan: That all escalated rather quickly
> 18:28 – Bill: Lololol

The group as well as Tasha rewarded Bill's behaviour with "LOLs", by encouraging him to court another female and drawing out the commentary on

Tasha's body. One respondent used humour to communicate his discomfort. Stan said at one point, "Sounds a bit rapey Bill". Yet, it is not fair to simply say that Bill was being inappropriate. In truth, Tasha did label herself "the resident groupie" on July 22nd and was known for her flirtatious demeanour. In the conversation below Tasha posted an image of Bill's hand on her rear end with the comment "U too bad". This would suggest that she is not an "innocent" victim of male objectification when she was more than willing to objectify herself. Moreover, Bill's and Tasha's public tête-à-tête was a ritualised game they engaged in a few more times between June 22nd to October 31st 2015:

> 18:28 – Tasha: U too bad [Inserts a picture of Bill squeezing her butt]
> 18:28 – Rianne: Hahahahahahahahaha
> 18:28-18.29 – Bill: Ye bebe… there it is. [Inserts 3 Devil faced emoticon]. Mi haffi drink 2 red stripe one time … trus mi… stabilize mi. Thunder butt (I will have to drink 2 red stripe beers back-to-back to stabilize myself, trust me)
> 18:30 – Vince: Yes man. I remember that night. Good times
> 18.30 – Tasha: I had nothing to do with that, Stan
> 18:30 – Rianne: [Inserts audio file of r and b song "I want to sex you up"] ("Rock in Ja", WhatsApp Group Chat 24 June 2015)

Still, the objectification of the female body occurred on too many occasions to chalk it up to innocent coincidence. Casual conversations in the group chat, led to men "jokingly" extending sexual advances to female friends. Unlike Tasha, the women did not engage in flirtations and simply changed the topic. Schechner (1985) explains that dark play is tied to,

> …behaviour [which] isn't free and easy. Performance behaviour is known and/or practiced behaviour – or "twice-behaved behaviour", "restored behaviour", -either rehearsed, previously known, learned by osmosis since early childhood, revealed during the performance by masters, guides, gurus, or elders, or generated by rules that govern the outcomes, … (p. 118)

Barrow (1986) describes gender roles in the Caribbean as referenced from historically essentialised characteristics about masculinity and femininity. She suggests that "[a]lthough stereotypes and images do not prescribe behaviour in the same way social roles do, they nevertheless give rise to certain expectations" (p. 52). Only in one instance did a woman in the group chat objectify the male body. She posted images of naked men after the group was barraged by a flux of pictures of naked women posing with guitars on August 26th. She retaliated in kind by posting two pictures of naked men with guitars. The responses by the male participants were an exercise in hypermasculinity; verbalised expressions of disgust and dislike. She effectively destabilised the conventional power dynamics in the group with this act. Jennifer undermined the symbolic expectations of the female form as a facilitator of male desire and pleasure and located the male form as an instrument of female desire and pleasure. This act also inserted the female voice into the conversation about sex. Women in the group usually stayed silent when men articulated their sexual needs and desires.

4.2 The Politics of Gendered Discourses

Hope (2006) explains that "[i]n postcolonial societies such as Jamaica, gender stratification operates in a framework of patriarchy that can clearly be defined as a system or society reflecting values underpinning the traditional male ideal" (p. 37). This "masculinism in a political context" is perpetuated by social discourse. Like Barrow (1986) and Lewis (2005), Hope (2006) credits slavery and colonialism as structuring the way patriarchy in Jamaica is enforced and performed through gender stratification. Subsequently, the physical and virtual domain of the rock music scene, can be characterised as a site of patriarchal power, where the politics of difference trivialised female concerns and sexualised the female identity to feed the male Ego.

The rare protests against the sexualising of women and the misogynistic practices of local men were witnessed in a tense group discussion on a video posted by XANXUS on July 1st (2015). In the text, a man of seemingly African nationality plied a Jamaican woman for sex in the U.S. (the exact state was not posted). A video of the woman verbally abusing the man for even suggesting he pay her for sex was displayed on Facebook and then reposted in the "Rock in Ja" chat. A debate on the appropriateness of the woman's response and the man's offer ensued the following comments made by Vince and Dominique on July 2nd:

> 1:02: Vince: Dominique explained that a man's role was to recognise the oppression dunno. Di man walk her out and she follow him wid har fuckries
> 1:03 – Xanxus: No dawg. Him rude say him goin give 1k ($1,000) to fuck her. Granted she shouldn't have walked him down cuz he could box her (hit her). But he deserved it
> 1:08 – Vince: That's exactly what I mean tho. She persisted so much that other men had to intervene. She just kept pushin
> 1:09 – Stan: Dwl (Dying with laughter). Yeah. Shi should tek har fawud and gwann (She should have left after her initial response)
> 8:39-8:45 – Dominique: … follow him with her fuckeries … really Vince … his question is something African men seem to think they have a right to do … I was told by the son of an African diplomat that I am lucky he is even interested in me … in the same sentence he says Jamaican men are not real men because they are no Black … as far as I am concerned if dat pussy di touch her she would kill him
> When you own a pussy u can call it fuckeries … box her… if him could box her he would have done it … dat woman have balls of steel and I appreciate her effort cause some of us would jus walk away
> All woman have is dem mouth and she used it … This is a man's world. U need a daughter Vince
> …any man who does not understand needs a daughter … a pretty one with a brain … and mek an African man come and ask her dat … 1500 for pums (sex) (after u educated dat child the insult really stings) and a box is not what him going to get
> Big up to the won who say "My pussy would vomit on ur face that way it ugly …" ("Rock in Ja", WhatsApp Group Chat 2 July 2015)

Vince strongly stated that the man was physically stronger than the woman though the female was never visible in the video. Male violence was reasoned as a fair response to the Jamaican woman's verbal tirade. Vince felt she could have gotten attacked or "worse". Dominique held that the only weapon females had in their arsenal was the right to free speech and it should be used in the fight for gender equality. She equated this conflict to other gender and race struggles in the U.S. - Rosa Parks' iconic fight to sit at the front of the bus and the feminist pro-choice movement. Dominique explained that a man's role was to recognise the oppression women faced every day and support her struggle to throw off oppression. Vince agreed but also suggested that a man's role was to tell the woman to "ease up" when she has already won. Stan corroborated this by saying "Too far is too fuckin far regardless of genitalia". By the end of the conversation, Dominique's critique of the patriarchal system which she and other women were subject to was dismissed. This dismissal effectively blotted out pertinent arguments made about female oppression in Jamaica.

In response to Dominique's woman-centered argument, Jennifer felt that women and men should not turn every confrontation into a battle of the sexes. Dominique maintained that there was a level of disrespect extended to women in their professional and social circles by men and this needed to stop. The group then began to equate Dominique's stance on the oppression of women in the contemporary society with "the old guard", i.e., Feminists. They felt that women had more access to power in the world and pointed out that in American pop music, Hollywood and the Jamaican law fraternity women were earning as much as men and oftentimes more.

The gendered discussion above highlights Daynes' (2010) assumption that imitation is a product of the Black collective memory which is vitalised by the reconstruction of the past through narratives (231-233). This reconstruction in the Caribbean are vestiges of colonial tactics as "Caribbean people have largely accepted Europeans' views of their… behaviour as part of a more general self-depreciation and negative evaluation of their cultural behaviour" (Bolland, 2002, p. 27). Most in the group discussion adopted the dark colonial tactic of transcribing cultural acts with depreciating comments. Schechner (1988) positions the forces which motivate dark play as utilizing language to unconsciously reference history (p. 15). Furthermore, Butler (2003) projects that gender is a discursive performance that is highly regulated, stylized and repeated in accordance with historical heterosexual agendas. Subsequently, the social imagination binds gender to stereotypical binaric displays of masculinity and femininity (p.153).

Despite Dominique's resistance to conventional ideas on the male and female typologies and the support of two male members, the majority of the group regardless of their gender, were not convinced. Furthermore, the unconvinced even reimagined the history of gender relations to substantiate claims of female authority. Group members described a time harkening back to Cleopatra when women held power. In response to gender inequality in the workplace, it was suggested that if a woman feels she is not being paid enough, she could simply use the law to demand equal pay. Additionally, some men stressed that matrimonial law favoured the woman and the rights of the man were constantly ignored. They surmised that women had "tons of power"

but they did not know how to use it. The males in the group argued that Feminists were women who wanted to "rule" men. Instead, they described the rock scene as favouring an egalitarian system where all were respected and loved. To their minds, selfish humans undermined equality as they did not support each other's resistance. The group chat identified that the Jamaican's preoccupation with the male Ego, did not allow the community to work together to achieve joint goals.

The group's rewriting of history ignored the global struggle of women for social equality. The group's discussion on gender biases concluded in the superficial wish for "the equality for all". Even Dominique was silenced by the collective's opinion that "some" egalitarian system would fix social ills and women just did not know how to access their social power to fight institutional oppression. More than this, Jamaican men were powerless in relation to their women. These ideas removed the woman from the center of the discussion and reinserted the male form as a hero who knew how to "access" social power and not be oppressed. As the protagonist in the narrative on oppression, however, males were also victims to the powerful powerless – Jamaican women. Hope (2010) labels this the Delilah complex, "where the female/feminine is treated as dangerous with the power to weaken or betray men" (p. 69).

Dark play inverts and disorients norms with its narratives which are used to restore behaviours (Schechner, 1988, p. 5; Linderoth & Mortensen, 2015; Johnson, 2019). In this light, the group's ignorance of the history of female oppression, the symbolic violence caused by the sexualised images of women and the ratification of hypermasculinity were a reflection of mainstream practices. Foucault explains that "the social body is the effect not of a consensus but of the materiality of power operating on the very bodies of individuals" (Gordon, 1980, p. 55). The dark play of the scene's gendered discourses hid the "serious work" enacted to maintain the power dynamics instituted by Jamaica's hegemonic masculinities. Though the conversation concluded with the understanding that Jamaicans should strive to be less selfish and advocate for each other's oppressions, the subjugation of Jamaican women was discounted as among these causes. Hegemonic masculinity reinserted its dominance by reshaping history with men as the victims of women.

5. Conclusion

"Safe" defined the sense of security rock members felt at live rock shows, in their peer group and familiar locations. Rock events were a haven away from the disapproving eyes of the general public as few venues were considered supportive of alternative acts. For instance, Tony's Bar, a site in Kingston for many rock concerts, was consistently described by members as "safe", "secure", "church", "home" and the audience within were likened to "family", "friends", and "love" as evidenced in Vernon's and Melissa's comments in sections 2 and 3 of this paper The rock scene was framed as a space where none of its members judged each other because they themselves knew how it felt to be criticized by the mainstream. Acceptance and tolerance were important motivations in the group's dynamic. Mainstream music spaces

which strictly played dancehall and reggae were criticized as unwelcoming and prejudicial to alternative music and practices outside of "typical" Jamaican conventions.

The scene's physical and virtual meeting places did more to maintain heterophobias than overthrow them. Heteronormative discourses allowed the group to "rebecome what they once were" (Schechner, 1985, p. 37) despite their taste for rock music: prejudicial Jamaicans. In the extract given in section 4 above, the cyber chat reaffirms their belonging in the Jamaican politic by objectifying the female body with images exchanged in the group. This appeased heterosexual male desires and undermined the threat women posed to the hypermasculine Ego. Even the act of accepting lesbians within the group was a means to allocate the female identity within the male sexual fantasy of the ménage à trois.

The maintenance of the perception of gay men as sex offenders and interlopers on femininity in the extracts provided in section 3 discredits the scene as a space without prejudices. Like the attitudes of social actors in the dancehall sector, the feminization of men and the fear of rape motivated rock members to police themselves and other males for representations of queerness. It seems, whether online or offline, the rock music scene was a danger zone for women and gay men. Unfortunately, the rock scene was not a safe haven for all groups as women and gay men were continuously subjugated by heteronormative narratives. It is quite clear that "Rock in Ja" executed dark play within the WhatsApp chat. As an affinity site, a place of learning and civic participation, the members of the group practiced the dark play of Jamaican heteronormativity alongside their "safe" philosophy. Dark play unconsciously authorized members to sprout misogynistic and homophobic discourses concurrent to human rights debates.

There is a lot of room in the scene to become much more tolerant of social differences as evidenced in Dominique's viewpoint in the WhatsApp conversation in section 3. The underlying determination to become more welcoming to Others was expressed continuously by participants throughout the length of the study. The acceptance of the queer performance in the Jamaican soca scene is evidence that the local attitudes are more tolerant than they have been in the past. Given the intense heterophobias held by the wider society, it is encouraging that rock group members are preoccupied with fashioning the scene into a "safe place" despite their dark play. Hopefully, with time, the scene's daily conversations may reflect the elevation of women and gay men to a place of equality and respect; a distinction heterosexual males in Jamaican society hold.

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