

POLITICS, POWER + GENDER JUSTICE IN THE ANGLOPHONE CARIBBEAN



Women's Understandings of Politics, Experiences of Political
Contestation and the Possibilities for Gender Transformation

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The Patriarchal State and the Development of Gender Policy in Jamaica

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List of Acronyms

BWA - Bureau of Women's Affairs

CIWIL- Caribbean Institute for Women in Leadership

GFP - Gender Focal Points

IGDS- Institute for Gender and Development Studies

IDRC- International Development Research Centre

JCF - Jamaica Constabulary Force

NPGE - National Policy for Gender Equality

UWI- University of West Indies

Preface

This chapter is one of several outputs of a research project undertaken between 2011 and 2014 by the Institute for Gender and Development Studies (IGDS) at the University of West Indies (UWI), St. Augustine campus. Titled *Politics, Power and Gender Justice in the Anglophone Caribbean: Women's Understandings of Politics, Experiences of Political Contestation and the Possibilities for Gender Transformation*, the project was spearheaded by IGDS in partnership with the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and led by Principal Investigator, Gabrielle Jamela Hosein, with the support of Lead Researcher, Jane Parpart.

Additional technical feedback was provided by Project Advisory Team members including Rawwida Baksh, Eudine Barriteau, Cynthia Barrow-Giles, Patricia Mohammed, and Linnette Vassell. Feedback and support from Francisco Con-Montiel, from the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), also contributed to the project outputs. Support from the staff at IGDS, St. Augustine, and especially Tisha Nickenig for project coordination and management, and Kathryn Chan for graphic design and layout, deserve particular recognition.

The project examined four strategies to promote democratic governance, women's rights and gender equality in the Anglophone Caribbean. First, women's political leadership was explored for the extent to which it creates greater governmental will and capacity to more actively and effectively transform gender relations both within and outside of the state. Second, quota systems were assessed for their impact on effective women's participation and leadership in representative government. Third, the usefulness of national gender policy documents for promoting gender equality was evaluated. Finally, the impact of feminist movement building on women's capacity to be effective transformational leaders within democratic political life was investigated.

Each of these strategies has expanded the spaces for realizing women's rights and gender equality, created greater capacity (among women and men) to achieve transformed gender relations, and shifted the gender ideologies that present resistances to women's effective political participation and leadership. Together, they reflect a core set of historical struggles waged across the Anglophone Caribbean. This project therefore sought to document the history of struggle in five Caribbean nations. It focused on specific countries where these struggles appear to have been won. Trinidad and Tobago provided an appropriate case study for examining the impact of women's contemporary political leadership, Guyana for exploring the impact of quota systems, Dominica and Jamaica for exploring the formulation and impact of national gender policies, and the Caribbean Institute for Women in Leadership (CIWiL) for evaluating the impact of feminist

advocacy on women's rights, effectiveness and representation in democratic governance in St. Lucia. These cases thus investigate four global strategies for advancing democratic governance, women's rights and gender equality. They offer insights into transnational, regional and national alliances between states, international organizations, NGOs and feminist movements, and demonstrate the relevance of national case studies for understanding regional and global experiences. Indeed, the project's comparative, historical and case study approach shows that both regional and national case studies are essential if we are to understand how democracy, the state and politics offer opportunities for and resistances to renegotiating gender relations in different twenty-first century contexts. For a more comprehensive summary of the project's conceptual framework, methodologies and findings please refer to the Introduction by Gabrielle Jamela Hosein and Jane Parpart, available at IDRC and IGDS, UWI, St. Augustine. The following is a list of related chapters produced by the project:

- "Women's Political Leadership in Trinidad and Tobago, Understandings, Experiences and Negotiations" by Aleah N. Ranjitsingh
 - "Getting to One-Third? Creating Legislative Access for Women to Political Space in Guyana" by Natalie Persadie
 - "National Gender Policies in the English Speaking Caribbean" by Deborah McFee;
 - "Feminist/Womanist Advocacy Toward Transformational Leadership in the Anglophone Caribbean: The Interplay of Individual and Collective Agency" by Shirley Campbell;
 - "Crossing over the Barriers: A Historical Journey of Women's Political Leadership in the Anglophone Caribbean" by Beverly Shirley;
 - "Advancing Gender Justice? The Opportunities, Resistances, and Limitations of Guyana's Quota System" by Iman Khan
 - "Masculinities and the Practice of Dominica's National Gender Policy" by Ramona Biholar;
- "Enactments, Contestations, and Possibilities of Women's Transformational Leadership in the Anglophone Caribbean" by Denise Blackstock

Executive Summary

The government of Jamaica approved the National Policy for Gender Equality (NPGE) in 2011. As a statist and feminist strategy for change we are interested in the extent to which such instruments can challenge patriarchal systems of governance. In so doing, this chapter highlights some key features of patriarchy in the Caribbean state of Jamaica, its representation within and below the state, and the ways in which the NPGE engages with it. We present a critical reading of the NPGE, its aims, ideologies and approaches, and the process that it emerges as a product of the patriarchal Jamaican state.

In addressing the question of how gender policies as a feminist strategy can contribute toward gender justice, we first look at the wider debates regarding law and policies that challenge or reinforce gender hierarchies. By this we arrive at a sense of the ideological debates around gender and how that potentially relates to a gender policy in Jamaica. We also conduct an analysis of the NPGE itself to examine the extent to which such debates exist in the policy. We argue that the textual outcomes show shifting positions with regard to male domination and patriarchal organization of social relations. Our goal is to understand how the NPGE is related to the patriarchal state from which it emerged through a critically reading of the NPGE, its aims, ideologies, and strategies. Finally, we seek a deeper understanding of the efficacy of the policy process and its connections with the larger patriarchal context by engaging in discussions with participants of that process. This combination of methods allows us to examine how context and process influence the efficacy of a given policy.

Our research shows how the patriarchal nature of the state in Jamaica is evinced through the language of debates about important legislation in the Jamaican parliament. We find this to be an important indicator of the context in which the NPGE emerges and must be considered. Indeed, our research points to the ways that successive governments and parliaments over several decades maintained similar language. This includes the replication of patriarchal norms by male and female state representatives. For example, the NPGE was developed through a comprehensive consultative process with various stakeholders across the country. However, some of the results of this process did not prominently feature in the policy itself such as the countervailing notions of sexuality or women's rights stakeholders expressed.

In that sense the NPGE was severely encumbered from its genesis in two ways. First, it was insufficiently radical to challenge the patriarchal status quo, and two, as an instrument of the state it has to paradoxically change the same organizations and institutions that are responsible for implementing it. One may argue (and indeed many have) that approval of the policy is itself a step in the right direction given the patriarchal context we describe. We do not

dispute this, however, if the policy is a start, it remains unclear what the next step is, and where the momentum to create change beyond the NPGE may be found.

Introduction

In 2011, the Jamaican government approved the National Policy for Gender Equality (NPGE). Among other things, the policy sets a vision for gender equality and equity across all aspects of public and private life. Such policies provide guidance in developing solutions for specific problems such as gender-based violence, the limited political representation of women in local and central governments, and the unequal social and economic status of men and women. Implicit in our examination of the NPGE is the question, what should such policies be expected to achieve as tools for effecting gender justice?

We begin from the premise that in addition to efforts to change existing structural sources of gender-based inequities, gender policies should seek to change notions of masculinity and femininity that sustain patriarchy. While part of a global challenge to patriarchy, these policies must therefore be grounded in the specific social and cultural realities of gender in the countries where they are pursued. We note that in order to understand the efficacy of the policy, we must first understand its context and process. This chapter highlights some key features of patriarchy in the Caribbean state of Jamaica, its representation within and below the state and the ways in which the NPGE engages with it. The chapter presents a critical reading of the NPGE, its aims, ideologies and approaches, and the process that emerges as a product of the patriarchal Jamaican state.

In addressing the question of how gender policies, as a feminist strategy, contribute toward gender justice, our approach is to first look at the wider debates regarding law and policies that challenge or reinforce gender hierarchies. In so doing we will get a sense of the ideological debates around gender, and how that potentially relates to a gender policy in Jamaica. We conduct an analysis of the NPGE itself to examine the extent to which such debates exist in the policy. We argue that the textual outcomes show shifting positions of male domination, and patriarchal organization of social relations. That is, we seek to understand the relationship between the NPGE and the patriarchal state through a critical reading of the NPGE, its aims, ideologies, and strategies. Finally, we seek a deeper understanding of the efficacy of the policy process, and its connections with the larger patriarchal context by engaging in discussions with participants of that process. This combination of methods allows us to examine how context and process influence the efficacy of a given policy.

From a theoretical point of view, in looking at larger public and parliamentary debates, and the NGPE text and formulation, we draw on Tracy Robinson's conceptualization of the relationship between law and private life. Robinson² points to the inter-related ways that legal frameworks and social norms can work to reinforce relations based on patriarchy. Additionally, she points to the contradictions between the language of gender neutrality in law and the fact that men remain "the paradigm of a citizen." This contradiction revolves around how the law conceptualizes legal subjects, flattens gender inequalities, and approaches women's rights and gender justice. Conceptualizing our analysis of legislation, policy making and outcomes within this framework helps us to better understand the constraints and limits of the policy to effect gender equality. A related theoretical and practical concern is the period in which the policy emerged and that shaped it. Specifically, we examine the intersection of the dominance of neo-liberalism in the region, with its increasing emphasis on gender as an aspect of liberal human rights, and the contradictions that may or may not emerge at this juncture. The NPGE emerged when neoliberalism was cemented in Jamaica, and we reveal in our discussion that it also presented as part of a discourse of the state's economic imperatives, rather than as a discourse of rights, freedoms and social justice. This is not to suggest that economic imperatives are not critical to gendered power and to realizing "justice" and freedoms more broadly, but that the framing of what constitutes development can itself be problematic.

Our research shows how the patriarchal nature of the state in Jamaica is evinced through the language of debates on legislation in the Jamaican parliament. We find this to be an important indicator of the context in which the NPGE emerges and must be considered. Indeed, our research points to the ways in which similar language was maintained by successive governments and parliaments over several decades. This includes the replication of patriarchal norms by male and female state representatives. We then find similar ideological expressions embedded within the language of the policy itself, albeit in implicit ways. Thus, we argue that potential for the NPGE to promote gender equality is limited even while we note that the process behind the final policy document did not seek to imitate prevailing gender ideologies. Rather, it was the result of an extensive consultative process. Ultimately, however, the policy did not include many of the alternative views of gender relations that were part of its initial consultations, such as countervailing notions of sexuality or women's rights. This we suggest, points to an opportunity to expand the discourse on gender relations in Jamaica by building on

² Tracy Robinson, "Beyond the Bill of Rights: Sexing the Citizen," in *Confronting Power, Theorizing Gender: Interdisciplinary Perspectives in the Caribbean*, ed. Eudine Barriteau (Kingston, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 2003), 231–61; Tracy Robinson, "Fictions of Citizenship, Bodies Without Sex: The Production and Effacement of Gender in Law," *Small Axe* 7 (2000): 1–27.

the initial consultative process behind the NPGE. This can be part of an overall review of the policy that would perhaps go further in promoting gender equality in the country.

Methods and Approach

Consistent with Tracy Robinson's approach to understanding gendered power through an assessment of law and life, this chapter discusses: patriarchy in social relations (life); patriarchy in parliamentary debates and legislation (law); competing notions of gender justice underlying the NPGE formulation (e.g. women's rights, men's empowerment, creating gender inequality, creating gender neutrality in marriage, sexual offences, abortion and domestic violence debates); the NPGE document itself and its textual outcome; and the basis that we can understand the feminist struggle for gender justice when fought through the Anglophone Caribbean state in the contemporary neo-liberal era.

Our examination of the wider discussions regarding gender related laws in Jamaica is based on an analysis of the parliamentary debates in Jamaica on matters relevant to gender relations. We relied on the Hansard, which is the official record of all debates in parliament. More specifically we reviewed the Hansard for debates on legislation related to gender related topics, including marriage, sexual behavior, abortion and domestic violence, spanning the period from, the Matrimonial Causes Act of 1988 to the NPGE of 2011. This was not meant to be comprehensive, but rather to give us a sense of the nature of parliamentary debates around these issues. We found the discussions useful because they illuminated the ways that the state inserted itself into the so-called private sphere, thereby revealing the false dichotomy between private and public spheres. This is especially significant in the case of the NPGE because impacting gendered power nationally requires the state's intervention in the private sphere.

With the obvious exception of abortion, there is throughout all of the parliamentary debates considered, a sensitivity to gender neutrality. Baritteau suggests that to arrive at gender neutrality, states must confront hierarchies created within the constructs of masculine and feminine since they influence the distribution of resources and encode relations of domination.³ While the laws have gender neutral language, parliamentary debates give us a better understanding of how and in whose interests they are meant to be applied. They reflect patriarchal norms and understandings about the role of men and women in Jamaican society, what is due to them and their roles as citizens. Following Robinson's intersection of law and life, and from our assessment of parliamentary debates, we ask to what extent they confront

³ Eudine Barritteau, ed., *Confronting Power, Theorizing Gender: Interdisciplinary Perspectives in the Caribbean* (Kingston, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 2003).

gendered hierarchies. We may also gain insight into the ways in which understandings of masculinity and femininity impact the perpetuation of male domination in postcolonial Jamaica. Given the preservation of patriarchal understandings and modes of rule within the region, the importance of national gender policies may be seen within the context of the factors that have influenced, promoted and hindered their development in the Caribbean.

In examining the NPGE, our focus was on the text itself. We began by looking at the major topics similar to those mentioned above in our review of parliamentary debates (e.g., marriage, sexual behavior, etc.). In so doing we sought to assess how the competing patriarchies of the middle and underclass play out, and how NPGE adoption opens room for inclusion into power structures. We considered, for example, the explicit wording used to articulate policy goals, as well as which issues are deemed most important. Our examination of the text is based on the goal of understanding how the notions of gender equality and equity, and patriarchy are incorporated into the policy. This kind of analysis allows us to understand the connections between the policy document and wider patriarchal system. This connection we argue is important and often understudied with regard to the formulation of gender policies in the region.

Finally, we felt it was important to understand the policy process behind the NPGE given that the state and feminist view such policies as important. In this way, we can for example, examine the dynamics of potentially competing views of what such a policy should look like. Through six in depth semi-structured interviews with people involved in the development of the policy at various stages, we attempt to understand these processes while specifically looking at the key groups that participated in the policy formulation process and their motivations. We also attempt to understand the main voices that the document ultimately reflects, the public debates which informed the policy and the possible ideological and other tensions that may have underpinned the final document. We conducted interviews in person and transcribed them in Jamaica between May and November 2013.

Findings

The Patriarchal State: Whose Patriarchy?

Our concern with patriarchy in this chapter is with the ways in which men dominate the private and public spheres, and in which patriarchal masculinity is privileged and hegemonic in Jamaica. We are concerned specifically with the state, its insertion into the private sphere through legislation and the ways in which legislation and policy that challenge gender relations

can explode patriarchy. Along with the nuclear family, the state is historically and contemporaneously, the most critical purveyor of patriarchy. Its institutions, practices and discourses are inextricably bound up with the prerogatives of manhood.⁴ The Jamaican state is no different. We begin from the premise that Jamaica, like most modern societies, is patriarchal. Consequently, we observe in parliamentary debates on matters related to women's rights, political representatives' keenness to silence women's needs or frame them within economic imperatives of the state, hide males' unequal access to power and protect heterosexuality, even when it is violent. In this way, the state engages in a process of reproducing hegemonic masculinity. What therefore should we expect when the state engages in the production of a national policy on gender equality? Even while the NGPE framers and stakeholders of the NPGE may be undeniably committed to gender equality, implementing it becomes an important challenge when the state is deeply steeped in patriarchal understandings.

The Jamaican state's male centredness is evidenced most powerfully by the over-representation of men in government---in 2013 only 14% of parliamentarians were women. At the same time, it is important to note that a woman currently heads the Jamaican government---Prime Minister, Portia Simpson Miller. This does not however detract from the fact that the government is ideologically male centred and patriarchal in orientation. In addition, the Jamaican state is representative of and central to male dominance in broader society. Hence even women in parliament often betray patriarchal sentiment and their prerogatives remain limited or curtailed by patriarchal norms. In discussions on the Sexual Offences Act, for instance, Olivia "Babsy" Grange, former minister responsible for women's affairs, implored women, mothers, girlfriends, wives and sisters, "you know your men best, you know the things that bother them....we know that women have the power to stop a lot of the crimes taking place." Women, she said, should be more proactive in helping to stop and solve crime."⁵ Patriarchal sentiments ultimately find a way of imposing the burden of responsibility for male misbehavior on women. In these cases, society views women as distractions to men in the performance of patriarchal duty, as encouraging misbehavior, or as simply failing to keep men in check.

Even while female politicians participate in preserving patriarchy, women do not receive equal respect and power in parliament. In her 2011 statement to parliament on International Women's Day, Prime Minister Portia Simpson-Miller stated that women in parliament "are

⁴ Wendy Brown, "Finding the Man in the State," *Feminist Studies* 18, no. 1 (1992): 8.

⁵ Jamaica Hansard, "January 13 – March 31, 2009" 34, no. 3 (2009): 268.

always held to a different standard and a higher standard than our male counterparts are judged. We're under more scrutiny than our male counterpart." Simpson-Miller argued that women needed to be more involved at all levels of the political process, but that they suffered constraints to their involvement. When Member of Parliament Natalie Neita-Headley responded that women were in need of greater financial support to facilitate their involvement, a member declared "go a family court fi dat." The outburst from the member diminished Simpson-Miller's and Neita-Headley's claims, and more generally, women's vulnerabilities. It represented a tendency within patriarchal Jamaica to dismiss women's vulnerabilities, which is an obstacle to advancing their causes in daily life. This makes us question whether the Jamaican state would fully allow strategies to reform the status quo of gendered power.

We argue in this chapter that the patriarchy of the Jamaican state is most concerned with the domination of a specific group of men---middle class, heterosexual men---over society. From its inception, the postcolonial state was captured by the Jamaican middle class and brown male,^{6 7} and control over it was later extended to the black middle class male. Middle class masculinity imposed itself as *the* legitimate power base within the state through symbolic manipulation and violence when it deemed necessary. We will refer to this as bourgeois patriarchy in Jamaica. Presently, bourgeois patriarchy faces direct challenge from masculinity at play in the urban underclass, in its use of violence against the state and within informal structures of power in politics and the economy.⁸ This challenge emerged from early independence, but the state now finds itself unsure of its powers over that segment of the population.⁹ The increasing presence of women in important sectors of the economy also presently challenges bourgeois patriarchy. Keeping these challenges in mind, this chapter will question whether there is a crisis of or resilience of patriarchy existing in Jamaica, and how then does the state buttress against challenges especially in light of the adoption of policies such as the NPGE and other legislative manoeuvres in favor of women? We will also explore how and which women become beneficiaries of this process.

The place of bourgeois patriarchy is best seen in the stereotyping of working class men in Jamaica. In a broad sweep, society stereotypes these group of men as worthless because

⁶ See Louis Lindsay, *The Myth of Independence: Middle Class Politics and Non-Mobilization in Jamaica* (Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of the West Indies, 1975); Cyril Lionel Robert James, *Party Politics in the West Indies* (Vedic Enterprises, 1962); Linden Lewis, "Masculinity, the Political Economy of the Body, and Patriarchal Power in the Caribbean," in *Gender in the 21 St Century: Caribbean Perspectives, Visions and Possibilities*, ed. Barbara Bailey and Elsa Leo-Rhynie, 2004, 236–61.

⁷ See Maziki Thame, "Reading Violence and Postcolonial Decolonization Through Fanon: The Case of Jamaica," *Journal of Pan African Studies* 4, no. 7 (2011): 75 for a discussion of the ways in which that masculinity imposed itself on the working class through garrison politics.

⁸ For a discussion see Obika Gray, *Demeaned but Empowered: The Social Power of the Urban Poor in Jamaica*. (Kingston, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 2004).

⁹ For a discussion, see Thame, "Reading Violence and Postcolonial Decolonization Through Fanon: The Case of Jamaica."

not only are they absent from the family, but are also absent from the formal economy and appear to contribute to the destabilizing forces of violence and criminality. Deborah Thomas pointed out that there is a shifting problematic with regard to black masculinity. In the Jamaican context, black working class masculinity. She argued that “the culture of poverty discourse (in which black men are irresponsible, selfishly status seeking, and incorrigibly undomesticated) has given way to the culture of violence discourse (in which black men---because they are undomesticated---are susceptible to the pull of gangs and the street, through which they become pathologically incapable of demonstrating empathy or human compassion).”¹⁰ They are problems, Thomas stated, because they are not household heads and stable breadwinners actively present or sufficiently represented as legitimate entrepreneurs, thereby explaining poverty and underdevelopment.¹¹ This discourse reads in the NPGE text in a preoccupation with preserving “men’s rights,” and in an attempt to rescue so-called marginalized men.

The place of violence in Jamaican popular culture and wider society indicates mainstream patriarchal norms. Dancehall culture expresses and rejects dominant norms of society, but is also an excellent resource to examine the patriarchal nature of Jamaican society and men’s domination over all. This culture also clearly represents the position of the working class male, their dislocation and power within the state. Donna Hope noted that dancehall represents the “shotta”, like the “Don” and “rudebwoy” as positive masculine figures that uphold the view of masculinity as premised in power, aggressiveness and strength. Violence and gunmanship achieve these means in dancehall, and Hope argued that the approval of violence is in direct contestation with traditional middle-class mores in Jamaica.¹² We would argue, however, that rather than representing a contestation with traditional middle class mores, it is a contestation of middle class power over the poor. It is our view that the Jamaican middle class also shares a patriarchal view on the place of violence as a show of positive masculinity. What it does not share is the view that violence should be a weapon of the poor. We are led then to accept Linden Lewis’s argument that while all men are beneficiaries of patriarchy, not all men exercise the same levels of patriarchal power which is mediated by race, class, religion, sexual orientation and other cultural considerations.¹³ The working class, absent and unmarried father

¹⁰ Deborah A. Thomas, *Exceptional Violence: Embodied Citizenship in Transnational Jamaica* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 83.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 83–84; see also Thame, “Reading Violence and Postcolonial Decolonization Through Fanon: The Case of Jamaica.”

¹² Donna Hope, *Inna Di Dancehall: Popular Culture and the Politics of Identity in Jamaica* (Kingston, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 2006), 96, 99.

¹³ Linden Lewis, “Envisioning a Politics of Change within Caribbean Gender Relations,” in *Gendered Realities: Essays in Caribbean Feminist Thought*, ed. Patricia Mohammed (Kingston, Bridgetown, Port of Spain: University of the West Indies Press and The Centre for Gender and Development Studies, 2002), 513.

is therefore subordinated within the bourgeois patriarchal state, given his multiple failures including in Jamaica, his presumed tendency to *await handouts from the state*.¹⁴

The contemporary perceived immanent threat of female takeover of the nation also highlights gendered power in Jamaica. Presumably today, the Jamaican male faces marginalization because of their failure to meet patriarchal standards of manhood and because of the manner in which female “progress” in education and the labor market, along with the interpretation of their position as household heads. Female progress is taken as an indicator of male decline. Keisha Lindsay debunked the myth of male marginalization in the Caribbean pointing to empirical evidence which shows that women’s status as household heads should not be interpreted as an indicator of their social, economic or psychological power. What emerges from this mindset is a situation where women are in fact further marginalized by their status as household heads. Decision making in such households continues to revolve around conventional norms of masculine and feminine authority in which women control domestic tasks, and men determine decisions on expenditure solely or jointly with women.¹⁵

Lindsay noted that while female enrolment in education and literacy rates have increased, girls/women continue to over-represent traditionally “feminine” spheres.¹⁶ Women also hold higher representation in traditionally female employment spheres, face higher levels of unemployment and employ low ranking positions in most sectors, which translates to low wages.¹⁷ Women’s wholesale involvement in the economy therefore does not indicate their economic independence.

It is the case that some Jamaican men, particularly working class men experience marginalization, as the Jamaican economy declines and as the state eschews a welfarist role. It is not the case, however, that men are marginalized relative to women as a whole. Rather, structures of power treat these men as women in relation to the power of the state and groups above them in the class structure. Indeed, while middle class Jamaican women may be making progress, they do not displace middle class men in power. Women across classes are still subject to patriarchal power.

When considering indicators which are perceived as men failing to live up to expectations of manhood, we should seek to deconstruct the cultural norms and structural dynamics which produce them. In that vein, we can also arrive at deeper understandings of why

¹⁴ For a discussion of the state’s engagement with this view of the poor see Obika Gray, “Rethinking Power: Political Subordination in Jamaica,” in *New Caribbean Thought: A Reader*, ed. Brian Meeks and Folke Lindahl (Kingston, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 2001), 224–25; Gray, *Demeaned but Empowered: The Social Power of the Urban Poor in Jamaica*.

¹⁵ Keisha Lindsay, “Is the Caribbean Male an Endangered Species,” in *Gendered Realities: Essays in Caribbean Feminist Thought*, ed. Patricia Mohammed (Kingston, Bridgetown, Port of Spain: University of the West Indies Press and The Centre for Gender and Development Studies, 2002), 56–82.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 63–64.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 66–69.

for instance, men opt out of education and the formal economy. These are feminized spaces precisely because men are not necessarily able to play patriarchal roles within them, given the low wages in these sectors and the declining faith in the dream of social mobility through education. These dynamics, however, are not clearly stated in the NPGE. Rather the policy assumes the problem of male marginalization as a given which ought to receive public attention. It does not sufficiently interrogate popular readings of male and female socioeconomic conditions in contemporary Jamaica.

Bourgeois patriarchy, like patriarchy in general, is also characteristically homophobic. There is currently therefore a preoccupation within the Jamaican state that homosexuality is a “rising” threat to the nation. This was clearly evinced in the debates on the Sexual Offences Act, which passed in parliament in 2009. The debates revealed the extent of the state’s commitment to heteronormativity, particularly by purposefully limiting the definition of sex to exclude homosexual sex and further in its association of rape and buggery. First, there was concern that the Sexual Offences Act would make rape carry a sterner penalty than buggery, but the prime minister assured all concerned in the House that an amendment to the Bill would ensure that buggery would carry as stern a policy as rape.¹⁸ Then Minister of Education Andrew Holness noted an incongruity in the penalty structure caused by amendments to the Offences Against the Persons Act, which provided a maximum penalty of ten years imprisonment for buggery and a minimum of fifteen years to life imprisonment for rape. Holness argued that there is “an inconsistency with the penalty structure and would suggest a greater crime is being committed in terms of rape versus buggery.”¹⁹ In responding then Prime Minister Bruce Golding noted,

...there were offences in the law which were nowhere as serious as anal abuse, but were carrying a more serious penalty because the legislation approach that question with timidity.” He said, “We had to be very careful to make sexual intercourse as defined in law very specific, which means a man in relation to a woman. Any relaxation of that definition would take us onto a promenade on which it was not felt by me, that we want to go.”²⁰

Member of Parliament Ernest Smith clearly articulated the promenade to applause in the house. He opined that “buggery is not sex and those who engage in it and think it is sex, is no sex, its buggery.” He continued, “buggery is buggers....I am very concerned at the extent to which homosexual activities seem to have overtaken the country.”²¹ This example mirrors the ways in

¹⁸ Jamaica Hansard, “January 13 – March 31, 2009,” 273.

¹⁹ Ibid., 221.

²⁰ Ibid., 352.

²¹ Ibid., 234.

which legislation on sexual offences in Trinidad and the Bahamas “conflate violent heterosexual domination such as rape and incest becomes equated with same sex relations, effectively criminalising consensual homosexuals.”²²

Anxieties about the collapse of patriarchy in Jamaica are illuminated here in terms of the rise of representation of women in the public sphere, the perceived failure of working class men to live up to patriarchal norms and in the state’s crisis around the place of homosexuality in the nation. We do not believe, however, that any of these conditions in Jamaica seriously displace bourgeois patriarchy and its control over the Jamaican state. While this chapter contends with these contradictions in relation to the NPGE, we believe that as its most salient feature, the Jamaican state represents the interests of middle class men. Within that vein, we argue that there is space for the Jamaican state to champion women’s “rights” in instruments such as the NPGE, not because men are liberated but rather because it can be useful to preserving their place of dominance.

Women, Family Matters and Patriarchy in Jamaica

When considering the nature of patriarchy in Jamaica, it is useful to examine how Caribbean women cope with it, and what they make of their lives. An examination of the workings of patriarchy at the everyday level, below and in conjunction with the state will reveal some of the problems that the NPGE should address. Caribbean gender systems, while patriarchal, are not always rigid. Nita Barrow argued that Caribbean women did not fit received images and rhetoric; were not marginalized in the same way as their third world counterparts; could not be accommodated into private/public dichotomies which confined them to home, domesticity and motherhood; and though constrained by patriarchal ideology and practice, did not suffer the same subordinate status in relations with their menfolk (1998: xi). The findings of the Women in the Caribbean Project showed that Caribbean women’s lives had multiple dimensions.²³ These dimensions complement, contradict, compound and confront existing stereotypes of Caribbean women. On the one hand women emerged as economically vulnerable and insecure; displaying alarming levels of self-contempt; doubtful of their abilities to be effective leaders; deferent to their male partners in decision-making; defining sexual identities and roles as an intense commitment to mothering; and accepting of male domination and dependent roles. At the same time Caribbean women were viewed as resourceful, decisive

²² M. Jacqui Alexander, “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, no. 1 (1994): 10.

²³ Joycelin Massiah, “WOMEN IN THE CARIBBEAN PROJECT: An Overview,” *Social and Economic Studies* 35, no. 2 (June 1, 1986): 1–29.

and self-assertive; dominant in decision-making in the household; felt that gender makes no difference to their personal progress; adopted practical attitudes to prostitution as work; and desirous of relationships with men based on reciprocal emotional support, companionship and economic support. Caribbean women were also seen to find it necessary at times to have extra affairs with other women's partners to obtain money, have a strong sense of equality with men, and strive to be independent or at least interdependent with their male partners. The contradictions of gendered realities evident in state actions, also exist in everyday life and therefore Eudine Barriteau reminded us that Caribbean society will at times "permit women to take on responsibilities essentially constructed as masculine, as long as these do not produce a corresponding shift in the gendered relations of power."²⁴ The NPGE shows how on the one hand discourses of gender can emerge within the state, but also mirror the contradictions and contestations of everyday gendered power.

In setting the context for our discussion of the NPGE in Jamaica we wish to outline some of the ways in which patriarchy operates in the Jamaican social and cultural context and particularly at the state level. Our discussion starts with an examination of the institution of marriage, and explores how this reinforces patriarchy in the public sphere. We also consider its intersection with legislative processes that impact the conduct of "private bodies" (such as on abortion) and which provide critical insight into the character of state patriarchy and the context in which the NPGE emerged.

Among the most limiting aspects of women's lives and their access to freedoms and so-called liberal rights is compulsory motherhood and for the Jamaican middle class woman, compulsory marriage. Mothering represents the ultimate expression of womanhood and femininity, even for women who are not biological mothers. Portia Simpson-Miller's representation in politics as Mamma P is reflective of those expectations of the roles of women²⁵. In addition to the expectation that women fail as women if they do not reproduce, is the stigma associated with abortion. In popular understandings women who "dash weh bellies" are reduced to "walking cemeteries." Given the multiple mitigating factors which determine women's capacity to negotiate non-procreative and "safe" sex, and the social mechanisms that limit their control over their bodies, reproduction is presented to girls and women as their most viable choice if they desire normalcy in society. There have been strong anti-abortion sentiments across the nation. Indeed, abortion laws in Jamaica criminalize women and those

²⁴ Eudine Barriteau, "Theorizing Gender Systems and the Project of Modernity in the Twentieth-Century Caribbean," *Feminist Review*, 1998, 192.

²⁵ For a discussion of how similar representations of Simpson-Miller exist in the media see Taitu Heron, "Political Advertising and the Portrayal of Gender, Colour and Class in Jamaica's General Elections 2007," *IGDS Working Paper Series 5 - Gender and Governance* (2008): 59–104.

who assist them in terminating their pregnancies, and are out of step with common practice. In 2007, the Abortion Policy Review Advisory Group made its final report to the Minister of Health. It found that the Offences Against the Person's Act, which legislates on abortions, has held language intact since 1861. The Act provides for a maximum penalty of life imprisonment for women who have "unlawful" abortions, and three years for anyone who assists them. The group reported that 65-70% of women in the Caribbean would have had at least 1 abortion by age 44, and more than half of those would have had more than 1, making abortion "a majority phenomenon" for our women.²⁶

Under the Offences Against the Persons Act abortions are illegal in Jamaica under all circumstances, but changes to the laws have been considered since the 1970s. This period represented a marked ideological difference from the present. Within the socialist rhetoric of the 1970s there was an important concern for the freedoms of the Jamaican people. To make sense of the attempts at improving the quality of and access to rights for women at that time,²⁷ we must appreciate that the understandings of freedom which prevailed within the public and the state merged liberal individual rights, socialist ideas of redistributive justice (social and economic rights) and racially-based claims for justice in Jamaica. Jamaica, like most of the world, has since the 1980s moved firmly towards neoliberalism.²⁸ While the neoliberal tendency disregards questions of justice in economics, it remains committed to the preservation of liberal individual rights if they can be preserved while removing the state's socio-economic responsibilities to its citizens.

In 1975 Minister of Health Kenneth McNeil "impatient of the gross social injustice" called for reform of legislation impacting abortions, but could not advance the legislation in parliament given "the power of religious institutions that rallied against it." "Frustrated by the noise, McNeil simply enacted a policy of providing safe abortion services in a public health clinic on Eureka Road in Kingston 13."²⁹ In 2013, Minister of Youth and Culture, Lisa Hannah brought a motion to reopen the debate on abortion. She however couched it in language that showed more of a concern for the state's capacity to manage the care and consequences of "unwanted children" than for women's freedoms and rights as citizens in a civilized, democratic political association. Hanna noted that it cost the state \$1.7 billion a year to fund the Child Development Agency, and some \$436 million to operate government-run homes. She highlighted problems such as

²⁶ Ministry of Health, *Report of the Advisory Committee on Abortion, Ministry Paper No6/08* (Kingston, Jamaica: Government of Jamaica, 2008), 8.

²⁷ Legislation was passed during the period on equal pay, maternity leave and to secure access to financial support for the offspring of unwed mothers.

²⁸ For a discussion of Jamaica's neoliberal turn see Kari Levitt, *Reclaiming Development: Independent Thought and Caribbean Community* (Kingston and Miami: Ian Randle Publishers, 2005).

²⁹ Ministry of Health, *Report of the Advisory Committee on Abortion, Ministry Paper No6/08*, 9.

inadequate parenting skills employed by “child” mothers and the neglect and abuse of children, which would presumably encourage social decay given the “direct correlation between crime and unwanted children” as reasons to pursue pro-choice legislation.³⁰

Minister Hanna’s rights claims are in keeping with and are central to the advancement of neoliberalism in local politics and economics. Her arguments reflect a morbid prioritizing of finance over people’s well-being. She reduced women’s concerns regarding their control over their bodies to a means to purging the nation of “undesirables”. Even while it is important that Hanna raised the matter of women’s rights to abortion, and can be read as a strategic intervention given the power of patriarchy to deny women’s issues an airing, the way in which she entered the debate had no far reaching implications for women’s empowerment. Instead, it relieved the state of responsibilities to protect girls and women who as victims of patriarchy are unable to navigate their bodies as empowered beings. Abortion was presented critically as a means of cutting the state’s costs. The arguments occur in the context of men’s control over the formal sphere of the economy, and deepening neoliberal focus posited against women’s “control” over the domestic sphere but not their bodies. Women do not control state policy or its effects on their bodies and their families. While society expects women to manage the domestic sphere, especially in Jamaica in terms of matrifocality, they do not have control over the economic policies which determine their capacity to cope. Despite the well-known negative effects of neoliberalism on women’s worlds, the Jamaican state hastens its neoliberal commitments. Women’s absence from control over the economy is intimately connected to her ambiguous control over her body. The NPGE emerged in the throes of this neoliberalism in Jamaica, and we will show in our discussion that it also presented itself as part of a discourse of the state’s economic imperatives rather than as a discourse of rights, freedoms and social justice. This is not to suggest that economic imperatives are not critical to gendered power and to realizing “justice” and freedoms more broadly, but that the framing of what constitutes development can itself be problematic.

With the burdensome nature of childrearing, enhanced in the context of high levels of poverty in Jamaica, the stigmatization of abortion and of women who are thought to fail to be “good” mothers, motherhood itself becomes a powerful avenue to deepen women’s alienation from power. Since in the liberal context, the private sphere is not a sphere of rights and one must participate in civil society in order to have access to rights, women’s access to rights become limited by mothering and its demands at home. In the Jamaican setting, motherhood is potentially empowering given the ways in which mothers become the center of the home

³⁰ Doraine Luton, “Hanna Wants Abortion Laws Reviewed,” *Jamaica Gleaner*, June 18, 2013.

through matrifocality, and because it is considered to be an important function of citizenship. Robinson points out that motherhood is the mechanism through which women do service for the nation and is the basis for citizenship.³¹ It is nonetheless a limited citizenship as its potential is curtailed by the burdens associated with it. It is a specific type of motherhood which is valued in the Jamaican context: the burden bearing and virtuous mother, socially responsible for her offspring with no additional pressures on the state or on men, and a mother who can be held up as a paragon of virtue, who is passing on high moral codes to her offspring. Those mothers who are unable to cope fall out of this group.

The over-burdening of women is accepted and projected as virtue. Simpson-Miller would in this vein declare to applause in parliament that surely the men would join her in saluting Jamaican women, “bearing in mind that when things are difficult and the men do not even know how the children will be fed, mamma will find a way to ensure that both man and children are fed.”³² She is of course relating to her role as Mamma P, but also to generally accepted ideas about mothers’ roles. Her place at the head of the patriarchal state does not necessarily shift the discourse of gender, even while there is space for it within the state. The implication of this type of emphasis on mothering is that women must be actively engaged in the home and in the economy. Indeed, “there is no illusion that women’s commitment to the family should preclude paid work or other income-generating activities.”³³ Women’s labor in the Caribbean made them significant contributors to the public sphere, but this is experienced as additional burden because they also “bear a disproportionate amount of the burden of work in the home.”³⁴ In our examination of the NPGE, it is clear that there is a definitive sense that women’s integration into the economy is needed, and there is little that is meant to relieve her burdens. On the other hand, the feminization of certain sectors of the economy such as education (seen as problematic and in need of reversals) is seen as part of a threat to men’s power.

While society crucially values fatherhood as an aspect of manhood in Jamaica, it does not carry the burdens associated with motherhood. Patriarchy is sustained in absentia partly because the nuclear family has not been consolidated within the working class, and because from our observation, even within the middle class nuclear unit, male responsibility does not necessarily include child-rearing. Male initiation into fatherhood, itself an indicator of patriarchal success, emerges as a privilege of absence in the perpetual freedom it affords. Males’ roles as

³¹ Robinson, “Beyond the Bill of Rights: Sexing the Citizen,” 246.

³² Portia Simpson-Miller, *Statement to Parliament on International Women’s Day - March 8, 2011* (Kingston, Jamaica: Government of Jamaica, 2011).

³³ Robinson, “Beyond the Bill of Rights: Sexing the Citizen,” 237.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 250.

fathers are explicitly limited, and given their absence from the home and its responsibilities, they maintain their freedom to dominate the public sphere while women are burdened with work in the domestic and public spheres. For working class women burdened by the absence of men's support in the home, they are also doubly burdened by the state's stigmatization of them as reckless and irresponsible in bringing children into a world they cannot afford. The single, impoverished mother ultimately becomes a powerful symbol of a force against national stability. In an instant, her subordinate place is cemented in "unplanned" motherhood.

Like parenthood, marriage represents a critical space within and about which to consider the workings of patriarchy, and the access to citizenship that marriage provides in Jamaica. Tracy Robinson argued that "notwithstanding the gender neutrality of many citizenship laws in the Caribbean and the language of equality implied in Caribbean constitutions, men remain the paradigm of a citizen and in a significant measure, women are included as citizens through their relationship to men."³⁵ As a result, marriage becomes an important source of women's inclusion as citizens. Robinson argued further that, "being able to define oneself socially and legally by reference to a man through marriage provides a distinct form of legitimacy and acceptance for women in the eyes of the community." A legitimacy, she stated, which is nonetheless constrained since it depends on the performance of femininity based dependence.³⁶

Marriage represents an important mechanism through which women secure protections of patriarchy, in so far as their protection becomes the responsibility of their husbands and other men view them as protected and not as easily dismissible. While marriage is understood as important for women's protection, their protection is tied to their dependence on men. In parliamentary debates on the Matrimonial Causes Act of 1988 which sought to ease the process of divorce, this dependence was expressed when it was demanded that the legislation be gender neutral since in its original form the bill stated that a husband must provide for a wife's maintenance. The acting speaker of the house declared to laughter that "naturally" men should take care of women, and Mrs. H. M. Knight responded that "the man is the head of the house." Even while debating gender neutrality, women's dependence is taken as a given.

The debates also showed the state's preoccupation with and privileging of marriage. Several speakers showed a concern for the perpetuation of marriage in the debates. J.A.G Smith concluded his introduction of the bill by stating:

³⁵ Ibid., 232.

³⁶ Ibid., 248.

*I do expect that this Bill will necessarily make marriage more continuous but I sincerely hope it will do nothing to necessarily abbreviate or bring the institution into anything other than we would really like for that institution which we regard so highly.*³⁷

The house noted its approval with applause. Similarly, A. Johnson held that he hoped the Bill would receive publicity so that “people would get out of the whole habit of being afraid of marriage and not entering into it in the numbers which are needed if we are to have more and better families properly speaking in our shores.”³⁸

There continues to be a general feeling that the failure of consolidation of the nuclear unit is a national failure since it is understood as being replaced by insecure, mainly female-headed families that are not able to bring up “good” citizens. Women who are unmarried and procreating share a significant amount of burden in explanations of “national crises” in Jamaica. The sustenance of patriarchy in Jamaica depends on the construction of gendered power through the stigmatization of prevailing family structures, especially female-headed ones, and the promotion of marriage. Alexander argued that the household is an important ideological instrument of the state and “because it has been an important space in which a particular kind of hierarchical, patriarchal power has resided, the state must move to rehabilitate this sphere.”³⁹ It is the middle class male who emerges as powerful in the context of the nuclear unit and the state’s stigmatization of dominant family structures in Jamaica. In the usually middle-class context of marriage, men enjoy patriarchal status as the head of the family. Men’s presence in the nuclear unit gives them power over women but also over men, usually those in the Jamaican underclass who do not marry and do not enjoy status as responsible males within the larger society partly because of their absence from the nuclear unit. Given that marriage has not cemented itself among most Jamaican women and they assume positions as heads of households in the absence of men, the domestic sphere can represent a potential place for women’s power. The promotion of the nuclear family by the state is important therefore to the consolidation of men’s power in general, but the stigmatization of non-nuclear families is specifically important to consolidating middle class patriarchy.

Women’s subordination in marriage and similar patterns of domicile expresses itself most flagrantly in domestic violence. Yet even in debates surrounding the passage of the Domestic Violence Act (1995) there was ambivalence and even hostility to the protection of women by the state. First, the act was not accorded great importance by men of parliament given their absence from the sitting. In introducing the bill then Attorney General, A.J Nicholson

³⁷ Jamaica Hansard, “January 4-April 26, 1989” 14, no. 3 (1989): 10.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 13.

³⁹ Alexander, “Not Just (any) Body Can Be a Citizen: The Politics of Law, Sexuality and Postcoloniality in Trinidad and Tobago and the Bahamas,” 19.

observed that “this Bill doesn’t have to do with women alone. If you look in the Gallery, mam [the speaker] you will see a lot of women, but if the men knew what I knew they would be here too.”⁴⁰ While we might read their absence as disinterest, at the other end there was also expressed concern for the meaning of the bill for men’s power.

Then Member of Parliament Horace Dalley’s contributions to the debate give important insights on public opinion of men which betrayed patriarchal sentiment and fears about the decline of male hegemony. Dalley told the house that men complained to him that “man cannot talk at home again”, man have to now just come home and put down him money on the table”, “the man them will start singing for dem supper.” Dalley concluded, “The idea of a man having his house as his castle no longer exists.”⁴¹ These thoughts are clearly grave readings of the act and its potential to disempower men. They also point to assumptions about the control of women’s bodies, and who should have rights over them. Male control over the home is understood to extend to women’s bodies and consequently a bill providing protections for their bodies was received by some with ambivalence and hostility, as an assault upon men.

In this context, Robinson’s warnings regarding the encoding of contradictory experiences of gendered power into law become clear. Gender neutral language in the bill becomes a useful tool for making the everyday abuse of women invisible. This type of occlusion also finds its way into the NPGE. The NPGE was originally conceived as a policy for gender equality and women’s empowerment, but its emphasis on women’s empowerment was opposed at cabinet.⁴² The push for gender neutrality and an attempt to balance men’s concerns regarding their loss of power with the need to improve women’s lives and access to power diminishes the potential for legislation to challenge patriarchy. Indeed as is seen in the debates on the Domestic Violence Bill, a critique of patriarchy does not necessarily find its way into debates related to problems which emerge from patriarchy.

In his introduction to the bill, Nicholson argued that domestic violence was attributable to various causes, such as “drug and alcohol abuse; mental illness; lack of parenting skills; power play between the sexes and inability of some persons to cope with the challenges of life and relationships.”⁴³ Even though the bill is gender neutral, Nicholson recognized that Jamaican women are the primary victims of domestic violence. We should therefore assume that the people who Nicholson said are unable to cope with the challenges of life and relationships are men. But because domestic violence is de-gendered in the bill, he does not need to tell us why

⁴⁰ Jamaica Hansard, “24 January – 28 March, 1994” 20, no. 3 (1994): 290.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 308.

⁴² Faith Webster, Executive Director for the BWA, Interview, August, 14, 2013.

⁴³ Jamaica Hansard, “24 January – 28 March, 1994,” 286.

men's failure to cope leads them to domestic abuse while this is hardly the case for women. Further, his statement begs the question, who has the power in the "power play between the sexes?" The unequal distribution of power in society is hidden in the discourse. There is no recognition of the sense in which violence against women is a normal feature of patriarchal societies, and that it is patriarchy with which we must first contend. This failure to name and confront the root causes of domestic violence is part of a general failure to confront patriarchy within the state, and was also evident in the debates on the Sexual Offences Act.

In addition to the bid to exclude homosexual sex from consideration under the bill, a problematic view of sexual violence emerged in the effort to seek leniency and emphasizing rehabilitation for sex offenders under the Sexual Offences Act. Member of Parliament Dr. Donald Rhodd was the main proponent of a rehabilitative program for sex offenders. While we do not see this as inherently problematic, Rhodd's justification of the need for rehabilitation showed a lack of understanding of the relationship between sexual violence and patriarchy, which exists as part of the everyday realities of women. Rhodd pointed to a need for close scrutiny on sexual cases to determine the treatment of offenders who may not be considered dangerous to society. These offenders he claimed may be first time offenders, teenage boys, who "follow company and get themselves into trouble to gain so-called stripes".⁴⁴ He felt that these offenders had merely gone on the wrong path and that there was hope for many of them. His language suggested that sexual crimes can be seen as other crimes rather than as distinctly related to chauvinism. While Rhodd acknowledged that these behaviors are linked with ideas of manhood, as evidenced in his "gaining stripes" reference, he suggested that under normal circumstances these boys would be respectful of women but were somehow seduced into sexual violence. He did not express what he meant by rehabilitation but there was never any mention of changing ideas of manhood, of the hegemony of patriarchal masculinity or of the need to change attitudes to women.

At this juncture we ask, what are the state's responsibilities to arrive at gender equality in the context we outline? As neoliberalism shifts the burdens of dealing with poverty to women around the globe, the Jamaican state also consolidates and legitimates its failure to provide welfare to its citizens by explaining poverty through the lens of absent fathers; criminal, violent working class men and single mothers. We are expected to believe that marriage, the consolidation of the nuclear family and the "restoration" of men to patriarchal masculinity will rescue the nation.

⁴⁴ Jamaica Hansard, "January 13 – March 31, 2009," 217.

First, we should acknowledge that there is no substantive decline in patriarchal masculinity in Jamaica as suggested in this paper by the perspectives of men and women in parliament. Second, where society presumes patriarchy to be failing---the family (for working class men), the classroom and certain spheres of the economy--- are actually just simply shifting expressions of patriarchy. Indeed these men are responding to challenges to patriarchy which emerged in the neo-liberal era. Consequently where men cannot be breadwinners and power brokers in the state, they might express patriarchy through violent masculinity. Males' absence from the home is in this vein an expression of their desire for freedom. Their "return" to it should not be interpreted as a victory for the nation, but rather a victory for heteronormativity and male domination as is already achieved through women's fulfilment of their burdensome roles as mothers and wives in Jamaica.

At the same time, these indicators can be read as a crisis of masculinity within the bourgeois state. Expressions of violent masculinity within the Jamaican underclass present a challenge to the stability of the state and the power of middle class men over the nation. If men are not opting for the "civilizing" forces of education, who will be the allies of the men presently in power who have defined their masculinity through colonial tropes of respectability?⁴⁵ Indeed, the maintenance of bourgeois norms of patriarchy, norms found in the state's explanations of "national crises" is critical to cementing the power of middle class men over the nation. These men (married and educated) are held up as ideals of men before the nation. They control the state, its networks and its levers; they are able to police and punish those women's and men's bodies who do not conform to expectations or who threaten the state; and they are the major beneficiaries of women's labor as welfare givers in the home, as low wage workers and middle managers (distant from the apex of power) in the formal economy, and as party organizers and faithfuls in the political process.

From our analysis of the state of patriarchy in Jamaica we argue that any policy on gender equality in Jamaica should seek to deconstruct the workings of patriarchy and most critically, the hegemony of patriarchal masculinity. The preservation of heteronormativity, its expectations of masculinity and femininity are at the core of patriarchy and the NPGE should therefore seek to advance the freedoms of men and women. This would be evident in its approach to reproductive rights and sexuality, in its treatment of those men who are privileged and marginalized in Jamaica, and in its expectations of femininity, particularly its emphasis on the performance of female citizenship through motherhood and wifehood. The policy should

⁴⁵ For a discussion see Linden Lewis, "Nationalism and Caribbean Masculinity," in *Gender Ironies of Nationalism: Sexing the Nation*, ed. Tamar Mayer (U.K.: Routledge, 2000), 261-83.

provide mechanisms to alleviate the stresses on women, men and their offspring who do not live up to patriarchal expectations of marriage and the nuclear unit in Jamaica.

The National Policy on Gender Equality

Our reading of the NPGE and its impact on patriarchy is based on the modalities of patriarchy in Jamaica, which we have outlined above and on our research of the policy process. This process started in 2004 when the Bureau of Women's Affairs (BWA) began a series of public consultations on the substance of what was to eventually become the NPGE. The Bureau was supported in this regard by an advisory body (the Gender Advisory Committee),⁴⁶ which the government established. Both entities helped to develop the policy, which the government eventually approved in 2011. Although the period between the initial consultations and the final approval was long, it also meant that both major political parties in Jamaica, during their respective tenure in government, supported the policy.

We note that the policy does not aim to end patriarchy, but since it is a policy on gender equality we expect that at its core it must address male domination in Jamaica, including how it impacts the position of vulnerable men such as those in the working class and homosexual men. In exploring the extent to which the policy meets such expectations as well as how it negotiates the patriarchal reality in which it exists, we first examined the role the state played in formulating and implementing the policy, its ideological focus, the influence and motivation of actors participating in its formulation, and the potential impact of the policy to create change.

The State and the NPGE

We view the state in two senses in this section: the Bureau of Women's Affairs as representative of the state and the state as independent of the Bureau. The National Policy on Gender Equality of Jamaica emerged as an initiative from the Bureau of Women's Affairs.⁴⁷ The bureau is located in the Office of the Prime Minister. It is an arm of the state, and has no oversight over the state. It cannot therefore hold parliamentarians to account. Its duties are research and policy development, public education and project planning and monitoring with respect to gender and women's issues. The Bureau's capacity to implement the NPGE is challenged by resource constraints; slow processes of dealing with bureaucracies and changes of government and ministries which it answers to; the ambiguity of its status as an agency of

⁴⁶ The Gender Advisory Committee was established by the government in 2005 with the aim of developing a national gender policy. It consisted of fifteen members from various sectors in society and was chaired by Prof. Barbara Bailey (UWI, Mona).

⁴⁷ The Bureau is undergoing change that would lead to the creation of a Bureau of Gender Affairs.

women's or gender affairs;⁴⁸ and institutional weaknesses, such as its small staff.⁴⁹ When discussing the state, it is clear that the bureau can be at odds with the state in terms of its initiatives and drives, and the patriarchy which prevails at the level of representational politics, parliament as its executor, and the broader state institutional mechanisms. In the broader frame then, the bureau exists in the midst of the patriarchal state. There is little indication of a broad political will to advance meaningful change to effect gender equality in Jamaica, even while we see the state as central to that process. Parliamentarians did not publicly debate the bill, and our portrait of the masculinist Jamaican state does not indicate that there would be an inherent commitment to the demands of the policy. The policy is state-centred in its approach to engendering gender equality in Jamaica, and we question the expectation that this would lead to the deconstruction of patriarchy within the state itself.

Our assessment of the policy is that there is an overemphasis on the public sector in its approach to effecting gender equality. Its stated goal is “to transform gender ideologies, inequitable gender relations and gendered governance practices at all levels of public sector organizations.”⁵⁰ It privileges a multisector approach with an emphasis on bridging public/private divide, but it is unclear what is meant by this given that the content of the policy seems to mean public and private sectors. Arguably, the language of most policy documents will be similarly general in nature. As Mosse⁵¹ suggests this kind of language is geared towards providing sufficient ambiguity such that there are opportunities to draw on diverse actors during implementation. However, we contend that gender policies, as an instrument to challenge the same patriarchal institutions that are responsible for its implementation, cannot afford to replicate this pattern.

Among the NPGE's three objectives, two are focused on behavior change at the institutional and public levels. Its objectives are:

- to reduce all forms of gendered discrimination and promote greater gender equality and social justice;
- to strengthen institutional mechanisms, and develop the skills and tools required to mainstream gender in cultural, social, economic, and political institutions, structures, and systems; and

⁴⁸ Interview with ED of the BWA, August 2013.

⁴⁹ Interviews with Vassell and Heron (August 2013), and Wedderburn (November 2013). In fact, Wedderburn suggests that the NPGE will not be successful without first improving the internal capacity of the bureau.

⁵⁰ Bureau of Women's Affairs, *National Policy for Gender Equality (NPGE), Jamaica* (Kingston, Jamaica: The Bureau of Women's Affairs, 2010), 19.

⁵¹ David Mosse, “Is Good Policy Unimplementable? Reflections on the Ethnography of Aid Policy and Practice,” *Development and Change* 35, no. 4 (2004): 639–71.

- to promote sustainable behavior change, and improve organizational effectiveness and the capacity of public sector entities to develop, implement and monitor gender responsive plans, projects, programs, and policies.⁵²

The private sphere is not represented in these objectives, nor is it represented in the tools and strategies to be used within the policy. This is perhaps a significant obstacle in realizing its tools. Although the policy does not aim to solve all the country's gender related problems, it is unrealistic to expect that any meaningful solutions will emerge without the crucial participation of the church, media, exponents of popular culture, etc.⁵³

The NPGE's approach to change in the public sector is through gender mainstreaming, the implementation of gender responsive costing and budgeting, gender aware monitoring and evaluation and the establishment of gender focal points (GFPs) throughout the sector. It is expected that gender focal points within public bodies would serve to direct these agencies toward gender sensitivity and planning for gender equality. The GFPs are not embodied with any specific powers of implementation, they have no resources available to them and Heron argued that their success is dependent upon the specific dynamics of the public entities themselves, and the mechanisms of support within them.⁵⁴ One hundred and nine GFPs exist to date. Webster indicated that while they are eager and diligent, the momentum can be lost. She argued that institutionalisation is required since currently there is an emphasis on specific people, which raises the problem of sustainability.⁵⁵

Ideology and the NPGE

The NPGE is constructed on the premise that "Jamaica is an egalitarian society, which values equality and dignity of each citizen by affording and facilitating their human rights"⁵⁶ This is a curious position given that it is a policy meant to address the problem of gender inequality in Jamaica. It blinds us to the deep inequity and intolerance which prevails in Jamaica. The liberal foundations which this proclaims and which Jamaica as a nation claims to uphold, are not consolidated. If the policy is built on this premise, how is it then justified? While it claims to be dedicated to a human rights framework, the policy is most critically grounded in a desire for development. It claims, "The cornerstone of Jamaica's development is our people; therefore

⁵² Bureau of Women's Affairs, *National Policy for Gender Equality (NPGE), Jamaica*, 19.

⁵³ Interview – Wedderburn, November 1, 2013.

⁵⁴ Heron, interview, August 29, 2013.

⁵⁵ Faith Webster, Executive Director of the BWA, Interview, August 14, 2013.

⁵⁶ Bureau of Women's Affairs, *National Policy for Gender Equality (NPGE), Jamaica*, 19.

eliminating barriers to equal participation at all levels of society for women and men will translate into meaningful and sustainable human and national development.”⁵⁷

The NPGE is rationalized as making a meaningful contribution to the larger goal of national development. It states⁵⁸:

A national policy on gender would encourage the Jamaican community to recognize that development, as a multidimensional process, must involve the reduction of gender inequalities as an integral element of achieving broad based equitable growth. This would contribute to good governance by highlighting and integrating the concerns of women and men in all of the Government’s development policies, plans and programmes.

Within that vein its vision is “a society in which men and women have equal access to socially valued goods and are able to contribute to national development.”⁵⁹ This understanding of citizenship places a certain burden on nationals to contribute to national development. Citizenship then becomes contingent upon this contribution and ties human potential to the state and its ambitions, in this case “development”. The imperatives of the state become the imperatives of the citizen so much so that the policy hopes that it can “create a socio-economic, political and legal environment free of discrimination on the basis of sex; where females and males, at all stages of the life-cycle, can enjoy their full human rights and develop their *full potential as citizens*”⁶⁰ [our emphasis].

It should be recalled that the policy was developed at a time when neoliberalism is consolidated in Jamaica, which produced certain negative effects including the deepening incapacity of the state to fulfil its goal of development. Neoliberal economics pushed the state away from an emphasis on development and the provision of welfare to citizens. In addition, the Jamaican economy fares poorly in the climate of neoliberal globalization, increasing burdens on the poor and women especially. State failures are partly filled by an inflow of remittances from Jamaicans abroad, which provide a cushion to those at the bottom and a main source of foreign exchange earnings for the economy.⁶¹ The failing of the formal economy is also seen in the growth of the informal sector growth. This sector and deepening poverty has been associated with high levels of crime and violence among men at the lower socio-economic level.⁶² The state

⁵⁷ Ibid., 7.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 17.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 19.

⁶¹ Remittances are presently Jamaica’s first main source of foreign exchange earnings and come in direct inflows to individuals and families.

⁶² See for example Alfred Francis, *Crime and Development: The Jamaican Experience* (Kingston, Jamaica: Sir Arthur Lewis Institute of Social and Economic Studies, The University of the West Indies, 2009); For a discussion of violence and poverty in Jamaica, see Horace Levy, *They Cry Respect!: Urban Violence and Poverty in Jamaica* (Centre for Population, Community and Social Change, Department of Sociology and Social Work, University of the West Indies, Mona, 1996).

is presented with crises on a number of levels. Middle class men cannot rely on working class men for the sustenance of bourgeois patriarchy because many men are pushed out of the formal economy where bourgeois patriarchal roles are played. The pursuit of education, jobs and salaries do not seem a sure route to social mobility because neoliberalism has elevated only those who already had economic means and hence men have opted out of the process. Society also views the state as failing in its fight against crime and violence (associated with Jamaica's economic decline and the growth of the informal sector) creating a crisis of credibility for the state in its seeming inability to control the population, and in particular "wayward" boys and men of the urban working class. It also faces a crisis in that the state seems to be losing the battle against poverty and development. In the face of this decline, Jamaica's development model has not been re-charted and the state must explain why it fails to meet public expectations. State officials often seek to turn the public's attention to single mothers having too many children with too few dollars and burdening the state, and criminal elements among the poor diverting investment from the Jamaican economy and scaring tourists away.⁶³

We are drawn back to the state's attempt to re-center patriarchal domination through boys' return to the classroom and to better performance in education, through men's return to the workforce and entry into marriage for those who have seemingly opted out of their breadwinner role, and for women to marry and continue the work of mothering the nation, in effect bearing the burdens of a lack of development. As the effects of neoliberalism deepen the shift away from developmental imperatives within the state, the NPGE and its promise of gender equality can shift the goal of development to the citizenry. The NPGE can be used to bring women more deeply into the project of development supposedly as its beneficiaries, but the nation also benefits if they can act as engines of growth through their incorporation. It can bring fallen men back to the classroom, to respectability and to contributing citizens. The state's hope that marriage and the nuclear unit will triumph in Jamaica is consistent with this expectation from the NPGE that we be "good" citizens. It is also consistent with the state's need to reproduce and legitimize itself, and the men who have power in it.

In the context of the foregoing discussion, Vassell argued that the emphasis on gender equality as important to development is also itself a justification for giving due regard to gendered inequalities in that it was needed for decision-makers to take note. She argued

⁶³ See reference to Lisa Hanna above. Numerous such statements are made by public officials, for instance National Security Minister, Peter Bunting's statement at the launch of the Jamaica Employers' Federation's (JEF) 31st annual business and workplace convention and expo, suggesting that crime and corruption was preventing *rapid* growth and development in Jamaica – see http://www.caribbean360.com/news/jamaica_news/657583.html#ixzz2xk1r71Qz

further that economic imperatives can go further than a human rights approach (even in a popular context), because a human rights approach and especially an emphasis on women's rights is seen as militant, radical and feminist. She suggested that there is opposition to that kind of approach within the population at large.⁶⁴ Indeed, the policy makers argue that "there is resistance to considering gender as a national development indicator" because it is perceived that this will lead to the marginalization of men.⁶⁵ We argue that the ideal of fulfilling our potential as citizens is part of the patriarchal state's expectation---the citizen works to maintain the state and the men who power it. While we could argue that development is a good that all Jamaicans desire, it is not clear what is meant by development, only that we want women to be equal participants in it and that they can have access to its socially valued goods. So for instance, among the Ministry of Tourism's targets is the aim to ensure equal employment opportunities for men and women in the tourism sector.⁶⁶ This target is named despite the understandings we can gather from Kamala Kempadoo's work on tourism in the Caribbean or Jacqui Alexander's work on sexuality. Kempadoo and Alexander remind us that tourism in the Caribbean depends on sexualized stereotypes of Caribbean "natives" and their exploitation as sexualized beings, especially, the commodification and sexualization of women's bodies.⁶⁷ Indeed, socially-valued goods and development are gendered, and it is not clear from the Jamaican policy which norms should be questioned and which ones upheld as valuable. Overall, the policy does not radicalize ideas of development or its gendered norms.

The policy is weak in questioning gendered norms in Jamaica. Because of its state based, institutional and structural focus, the policy offers little in this regard. We believe that tackling ideological structures is critical to arriving at gender equality because even while institutional mechanisms may follow equitable gender guidelines, it is people who manage institutions, and patriarchal biases at individual levels can damage efforts at structural reform. While the discussion of the consultative process, especially evident in its appendices gives some indication that people questioned understandings of masculinity and femininity at that level, the policy does not seek to deconstruct Jamaica's gender culture and there is no attempt to tackle problematic norms in the strategies developed to effect gender equality. Indeed, the policy at times suffers from a reproduction of the heteronormative strains noted in our discussion on parliamentary debates earlier. Even within the policy there are prevailing patriarchal ideas which prescribe men's and women's roles. We gain clues into the gendered

⁶⁴ Vassell, Interview, August 16, 2013.

⁶⁵ Bureau of Women's Affairs, *National Policy for Gender Equality (NPGE)*, Jamaica, 11.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁶⁷ Alexander, "Not Just (any) Body Can Be a Citizen: The Politics of Law, Sexuality and Postcoloniality in Trinidad and Tobago and the Bahamas," 6.

ideas of policy makers in statements such as “the role of women in the criminal activities is disturbing”⁶⁸ and “the role of women in ‘protecting’ male criminals is disturbing.”⁶⁹ We can ask, why we should be disturbed by women’s role in criminality? Is this a general concern with criminality in Jamaica or women’s participation in it? Unless we have specific understandings of male and female, in a society with high crime rates, there should be no specific alarm about women’s participation in it. In its discussion of the problem of crime in Jamaica, the policy notes that men are over-represented as victims of crime and in the criminal justice system, specifically as a result of the patriarchal status quo.⁷⁰ It does not however give us a view to undermining this status quo. Among its targets and strategies, it charges the Ministry of National Security to:

- design and implement a comprehensive crime plan that includes strategies to address gender-based violence and other forms of violence against women;
- establish a safe house and 24-hour hotline to temporarily assist people who are the victims of human trafficking; and
- employ temporary special measures to increase the representation of women in the Jamaica Constabulary Force.⁷¹

While it distinctly views the problem of violence as a problem of male perpetrators,⁷² and a problem of women as its victims, it does not consider the problem of violence against men by other men. Heron noted that the policy was blind to violence against boys and homophobia.⁷³ The policy also did not engage with a view of crime and violence as symptoms of the domination of working class men in the power structure. Its view of violence and the role of the security forces is too limited, and consequently recommends few measures to shift masculinities away from an acceptance of violence as a part of manhood. Indeed, its failure to further interrogate the problem is extended to the attempt to pursue gender equality by incorporating more women into the JCF. The JCF is constantly called out for its own use of violence against the population. Why then would we wish to increase women’s representation in it? For the women represented in the force, what protections are being offered against its patriarchy? Also, as with women in politics, women in the force can conceivably become actors wielding patriarchal power over more subaltern women.

⁶⁸ Bureau of Women’s Affairs, *National Policy for Gender Equality (NPG E)*, Jamaica, Appendix 5, 59.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 63.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 10–11.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 49.

⁷³ Heron, interview, August 29, 2013.

The NPGE's situational analysis acknowledged that women are under-represented in positions of power economically and politically, and despite their over-representation in education at tertiary levels, face more unemployment.⁷⁴ It does not disaggregate by class, so we are not made aware if these indicators apply across class. We do not know therefore whether female attendance and performance outstrips boys in the middle class as opposed to the working class.⁷⁵ Yet the policy makers respond to the under-representation of men in the classroom with the solution that "they should be provided with incentives to enter the teaching profession."⁷⁶ Why we might ask, do men need to be present in the profession and how will such incentives impact the status of women in it?

In our analysis, we argue that motherhood and wifehood can limit women's access to rights and freedoms. The policy makes no decisions about women's reproductive rights. For example it states "Once there is a final and agreed upon national position on abortion, ensure that women have access to safe and affordable procedures."⁷⁷ It devices no innovations to ease the burdens of mothering, such as compulsory child care provisions by state agencies, though this would hardly be considered in a climate of economic decline and the dominance of neoliberal thinking. It makes no attempt to rescue the non-nuclear families which prevail in Jamaica, and de-stigmatize Jamaican women and men who fail to live up to patriarchal expectations. The policy is most heteronormative in its failure to tackle matters of sexuality.⁷⁸ Whereas the government of Jamaica is clear in its understanding of homosexuality and rights based on sexual orientation, the NPGE makes no such statement. It notes that a view emerging from public consultations was that the "Police [are] reluctant to investigate violence between heterosexual couples---they do so more readily in cases of violence between two men if they are in a homosexual relationship,"⁷⁹ but that domestic violence is derided in same sex unions and there are no avenues for redress in the justice system as a result of homophobia.⁸⁰ There are nonetheless no named strategies to de-stigmatize homosexuality or to encourage tolerance and protection within the Jamaican community.

A policy on gender equality in Jamaica would need to seek to reduce male domination. Heron noted, however, that dismantling patriarchy was not an explicit goal of the NPGE. She argued that this would have been unrealistic but at the same time she feels that there may have been an underestimation of patriarchy at the level of the Gender Advisory Committee, and

⁷⁴ Bureau of Women's Affairs, *National Policy for Gender Equality (NPGE)*, Jamaica, 10–11.

⁷⁵ Evidenced in *Ibid.*, Appendix 5, 59–60.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁷⁸ Taitu Heron, interview, August 29, 2013.

⁷⁹ Bureau of Women's Affairs, *National Policy for Gender Equality (NPGE)*, Jamaica, 12.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 14.

consequently the committee was not itself deconstructing it.⁸¹ The executive director of the BWA acknowledged that patriarchy is difficult to unseat and has to be “outworked in various areas,” and is therefore a work in progress.⁸² She argued that the process would raise the awareness and understandings of gender in Jamaica. We nonetheless find the approach the NPGE takes too limited and to be ideologically compromised. We could argue that the most difficult part of undoing patriarchy is the ideological battle. In Jamaica, the parliament reveals to be deeply patriarchal in orientation in the consultative process, and in the wider public men are sold on the notion of their own marginalization, women are conveyors of patriarchy and limited, as some men by prevailing understandings of masculinity and femininity. The policy does not seek to unseat the cultural underpinnings of patriarchy, and this limitation arises from its institutional and state focus.

On Power and “Stakeholders”

In observance of the Jamaican government’s consultative code, the Bureau of Women’s Affairs established mechanisms of consultation with NGO’s, community groups, the medical fraternity, security forces, faith-based organizations and the media in the process of policy-making. The bureau also observed Jamaica’s commitments to international and regional bodies and agreements on gender matters. Nonetheless most of the stakeholders we interviewed felt the process was top down, largely manufactured by the bureau. This is perhaps not unexpected as other research on policy making processes in Jamaica suggests that they are often centralized and exclude marginalized groups.⁸³

Among concerns of the consultative process was the limited voice of “grassroots” Jamaicans. Vassell pointed out that this was inevitable given the nature of the participatory process and its emphasis on a written product.⁸⁴ Some felt that women’s groups dominated the process, and that a specifically middle class and educated female voice prevailed.⁸⁵ Participants interviewed felt the policy would favor women across class, but that middle class women would most benefit especially given that it is the middle strata that has access to decision making.⁸⁶ Hutton argued that the policy’s focus on the state ensured that those women closest to the center of power will benefit most.⁸⁷ Some felt that there was under-representation

⁸¹ Heron, interview, August 29, 2013.

⁸² Webster, interview, August 14, 2013.

⁸³ Andres Acosta, *The Policymaking Process in Jamaica* (Washington D.C.: Inter-American Development Bank, 2006).

⁸⁴ Vassell, interview, August 16, 2013.

⁸⁵ Hutton, interview, August 23, 2013.

⁸⁶ Vassell, interview, August 16, 2013.

⁸⁷ Hutton, Interview, August 23, 2013.

of men in the consultative process, and hence not enough of their interests were incorporated.⁸⁸ Where they were represented, Vassell pointed out that they tended to emphasize male marginalization and that this had to be contended. She argued that it was difficult to have a conversation around that issue because the men would not respond to contrary data. Masculinity she said, was not looked at as a problem, and it was on the offensive. She argued that male marginalization became the source through which to incorporate men, and consequently consultations did not deal with how men's power constrains the behavior of women⁸⁹ and we could add, men themselves.

There were other cases of under-representation. Heron argued that it was a missed opportunity for youth, and hence voices that were not necessarily sold on ideological biases held by policy makers were not heard.⁹⁰ Similarly, Vassell observed that generational changes were not made clear in the consultative process.⁹¹ Heron indicated that there was also little representation from sexual minorities, and interests representing the reproductive health and rights of women. She posited that gender identity and homosexuality was avoided, that gender norms within homosexual unions were not addressed and consequently the policy was set within a heterosexual framework.⁹²

While many of the stakeholders interviewed point to an exclusive rather than inclusive consultative process, Tafari-Ama---who designed and led some of the initial consultations---provided an interesting counter-point.⁹³ She noted that there was indeed a broad representation of participants in the consultations, and that if any group was under-represented it was the upper classes. She argued that the fact that there was participation by teachers, people with disabilities, and others meant that this process was more inclusive than other similar policy-making consultative exercises the government initiated. This point is also echoed by Judith Wedderburn who participated in the initial consultation exercises.⁹⁴ The apparent contradiction stems from instances of disconnect in the findings and feedback from the consultative process, and the final text of the policy document. The NPGE includes an appendix which summarizes some of the issues raised in the consultations (NPGE, Appendix 6). While, as noted earlier, the policy takes no position on women's reproductive rights and repeats mainstream notions of heteronormativity, there were calls for legal forms of abortion and greater tolerance towards homosexuality. Thus, while such issues were part of the consultative process, they do not have

⁸⁸ Hutton, interview, August 23, 2013 and Heron, interview, August 29, 2013.

⁸⁹ Vassell, interview, August 16, 2013.

⁹⁰ Heron, interview, August 29, 2013.

⁹¹ Vassell, interview, August 16, 2013.

⁹² Heron, interview, August 29, 2013.

⁹³ Tafari-Ama, October 4, 2013

⁹⁴ Wedderburn, interview, November 1, 2013.

a prominent place within the policy. We note that this disconnect, while not necessarily deliberate, is in keeping with our analysis of how existing ideological forces influenced the policy-making process. For example, the issue of greater reproductive rights was given less focus in the policy perhaps because of pressure of religious advocacy groups such as Lawyers for Christ on the final outcome.⁹⁵ Such outcomes are not wholly unexpected in policy making, particularly where normative goals may conflict with those of influential groups in society. As Mosse notes, “Policy is an end rather than a cause; a result, often a fragile one, of social processes.”⁹⁶ Further, in the case of the NPGE, advocacy groups may well have been motivated to act on the basis that the policy and its wording were viewed as ends in themselves.

International organizations must also be seen as critical to the policy-making process since funding for policy formulation and implementation depend significantly on external financing.⁹⁷ As a result, ideas from international bodies were incorporated,⁹⁸ even while they may not have been involved with the national consultative process. The policy acknowledges their contributions and outlines the international and regional processes which Jamaica has partnered in or subscribed to. Its international partners included the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the Canada/Caribbean Gender Equality Programme (CCGEP), and United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF).⁹⁹ It is not clear how much power they had over the process, but Heron pointed out that they shaped the policy criterion. She also noted that their emphasis on measurability prevented certain foci, such as on public education (critical for shifting ideas) since it is difficult to measure.¹⁰⁰

Another observation about the policy process and its aftermath is that no popular commitment or agitation emerged to sustain and implement the policy. Indeed, as Vassell pointed out this should be seen in the context of the absence or weakness of an activist movement that could push for change. Vassell pointed to the weakness of the women’s

⁹⁵ Wedderburn, interview, November 1, 2013.

⁹⁶ Mosse, “Is Good Policy Unimplementable? Reflections on the Ethnography of Aid Policy and Practice,” 663.

⁹⁷ Note that the NPGE also recognizes the various international conventions and agreements on gender equality to which Jamaica is a signatory and which therefore influenced the content of the policy. These include (NPGE pg. 16):

The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW);
 The Nairobi World Conference on the Forward Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women;
 The Cairo Programme of Action (ICPA);
 The Beijing Platform for Action;
 The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs);
 Ten Year Review of the Beijing Platform for Action (Beijing+10);
 The Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality;
 The CARICOM Plan of Action;
 The Belem do Para Convention;

⁹⁸ Webster, interview, August 14, 2013.

⁹⁹ Bureau of Women’s Affairs, *National Policy for Gender Equality (NPGE)*, Jamaica, 82.

¹⁰⁰ Heron, interview, August 29, 2013.

movement, its lack of ideological clarity and backlash from a turn to the right in the wider society.¹⁰¹

We can argue that the state has a critical role to play as an institution of change-making in any society, but if the state is not radicalized, it is unlikely to serve this function. The state is most concerned with self-preservation and as a patriarchal institution, it will first defend the interests of patriarchy. The power of the bureau to be an engine of change is therefore compromised by the scope of its power in relation to the wider state. Because the approach to gender equality taken within the policy tends toward changing the state, the bureau missed an opportunity to mobilize the public towards its agenda. A popular agenda is critical because as a part of the project of reproducing the state, the state must contend with opposition to it and seek as it were to balance interests. Without a serious push from the wider public, especially women and men who are most disadvantaged by gender inequality, official stakeholders--the state, international bodies and NGO's formally involved in policy making will seek to set agendas that are specific to their interests and which are shaped by their own powers. We did not gather from our research that there was dissonance among stakeholders but the limited involvement of the wider public leads us to ask, what would a popularly driven document look like? Since we are dealing with patriarchy, the public which most concerns us, is women. Vassell argued that women have to play a vanguard role because "the people with the trouble know best how to change it." She argued that women need to show men how gender inequality harms them and how hegemonic masculinity damages men. She says women should seek to validate their humanity through partnership with them.¹⁰² Indeed mobilization for change in Jamaica has to be considered in terms of the need for feminism and feminist perspectives.

Conclusion

This paper presented an analysis of the NPGE and its potential to improve gender equality in Jamaica. We started with the premise that Jamaican life and law are patriarchal in nature and that this was therefore the crucial context in which the policy must be considered. This was evinced by our review of the myopic and patriarchal nature of debates around important legislation in the Jamaican parliament. Indeed, our research pointed to the ways in which similar language was maintained by successive governments and parliaments over several decades. Our analysis also pointed to the replication of patriarchal norms by male and

¹⁰¹ Vassell, interview, August 16, 2013.

¹⁰² Ibid.

female state representatives. We then found similar ideological expressions embedded within the language of the policy itself, albeit in implicit ways.

The policy was the result of a consultative process, which although extensive, did not prominently include the countervailing notions of sexuality or women's rights that were part of its initial findings. In that sense, the NPGE was severely encumbered from its genesis in two ways. First, it was insufficiently radical to challenge the patriarchal status quo. Second, as an instrument of the state it has to paradoxically change the same organizations and institutions that are responsible for its implementation.

One may argue (and indeed many have) that the approval of the policy is itself a step in the right direction given the patriarchal context we described. We do not dispute this, however, if the policy is a start, it remains unclear what is the next step and where is the momentum to create change beyond the NPGE. As Grindle and Thomas note implementation often acts as a new filter that alters the original goals of the policy.¹⁰³ This filter is often defined by state level institutional processes that based on our examination are already committed to a patriarchal value system.

We believe our discussion is useful to view the openings provided by the policy. The support given to the process by the state indicates a willingness to engage with gender matters. We should be careful to question what is at stake for those that power the state, and therefore what strategic means feminist can employ to disrupt the flow of power in the interest of unseating patriarchy. Inclusion at the negotiating table is not opened to all. Class impacts not only battles between male patriarchs, but also which women are sought as allies of the state. Women who are able to acquire the "requisite" skills will have to push to open spaces further and where they are unable to do so they must seek to get at the heart of the norms that inform policy making processes. They must seek popular alliances that could sustain a national dialogue for change and action towards gender equality in tandem with the NPGE.

The seeds of national dialogue were observed in initial consultations on the NPGE. They were inclusive to some extent, they were also reflexive in nature, and encouraged a critical questioning of the state of gender relations in Jamaica¹⁰⁴. A lack of awareness about and even opposition to gender equality among men and women is an existing obstacle in realizing the goals of the NPGE. However, Tafari-Ama suggested that the initial debates often hinted at more equitable visions of Jamaica and encouraged nuanced rather than monolithic views about gender among men and women, "...so that we could talk about how gender really cuts across

¹⁰³ M. S. Grindle and J. W. Thomas, *Public Choices and Policy Change. The Political Economy of Reform in Developing Countries* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1991).

¹⁰⁴ Tafari-Ama, interview, October 4, 2013.

class, time and space and other forms of identity.”¹⁰⁵ Indeed, in revisiting the NPGE and considering how to move it forward, the time may be right to initiate a similar moment of national self-reflection on gender in Jamaica. At the same time gender is not divorced from other ideological frames, and if development is part of a gendered and NPGE goal, the place of neoliberal economics in contemporary Jamaica and the questions of who it burdens and how it genders the nation must also be re-engaged and re-thought.

¹⁰⁵ Tafari-Ama, interview, October 4, 2013.

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