

ABSTRACT

This thesis analyzes the upper and middle classes in Jamaica between 1914 and 1945 utilizing the three main themes of stratification, gendering and ethnicity within a theory of Social Space which derives from the materialism of Karl Marx blended with the phenomenological theory of dwelling devised by Christian Norberg-Schulz and derived from Heidegger. The concept of social space incorporates the natural, urban, public and domestic spaces, and the position of the upper and middle classes in each of these spaces is examined.

The research conducted for this thesis demonstrates that within each of these spaces the upper and middle classes occupied positions of relative advantage compared to the working class/peasantry. Within the natural space, general patterns of land ownership and the distribution of occupations and income are examined. The conclusion is that the upper and middle classes held the greater share of material resources which generated wealth and income. In the urban space the upper and middle class population was concentrated in greatest numbers, and the level of access of these classes to urban amenities as well as their contribution to the creation of the urban infrastructure are analyzed. The public space is analyzed in terms of work, political life and recreational activities. Within this space, the upper and middle classes were owners/managers of enterprises and employees in jobs of professional status. These classes, especially the upper class played the most visible roles in social and political life. In the domestic space, the upper and middle classes occupied prime residential areas in rural and suburban environments and were more likely to be distinguished from the working class in terms of the institutions of marriage, and the ability to make long-term provisions for family maintenance.

While the upper and middle classes are, in general, readily distinguishable from the working class in each category of the social space, there are considerable inequalities of wealth, income, living standards and social status between the upper and middle classes. These are also analyzed. Other factors which contribute to the formation of the social space and affecting these classes are issues of race and gender. The two major changes during 1914 - 1945 are the opening of certain roles in the public space to women of the upper and middle classes, and, the expansion of the black and coloured middle class. These themes are also analyzed in detail.