Exploring Boys' Agency Towards Higher Education: The Case of Urban Jamaica

Shawanda Stockfelt

Introduction

Boys are under-represented in higher education institutions across the English speaking Caribbean (Caribbean Community on Youth Development, 2010; Jha & Kelleher, 2006; Ministry of Education Youth and Culture, 2004). This is particularly the case in Jamaica where girls outnumber boys at a ratio of two to one. According to the Jamaican government, boys' failure to progress through the school system begins from year 9 where many drop out and join dangerous gangs in the inner cities (Government of Jamaica (GOJ), 2009a, 2009b). This creates a massive burden on the Jamaican society as a whole where, as early as 1996, nearly eight out of every ten arrests made by the police were presumably committed by males under the age of 30 (Chevannes, 2002). More recently in 2005, the Jamaica Constabulary Force reported Jamaica's murder rate a high 56 per 100,000 residents (United Nation's Office on Drugs and Crime, 2007). The National Security Policy of Jamaica (GOJ, 2013a) states explicitly that crime, violence and corruption, presumably by young men, are now the foremost threats to the overall economic welfare of the country. According to the policy, within the last decade, Jamaica has fallen 51 places in the world ranking, one of the most rapid declines in the world (GOJ, 2013a, pp. 6–7). This level of loss is normally equivalent to a profound catastrophic disaster; however, in the case of Jamaica economic development is retarded by crime and the fear of crime. The result is an investment in programs and strategies to encourage boys to complete secondary school and possibly progress into post-secondary education. One of the core objectives of the national security policy is to keep boys off the street and encourage them to view education as a means of social mobility. However, what are the root causes of their under-representation, and what are their aspirations

---

S. Stockfelt (✉)
Graduate School of Education, University of Bristol, Bristol, UK
e-mail: shawanda.stockfelt@bristol.ac.uk

© Springer International Publishing Switzerland 2016

J.G. DeJaeghere et al. (eds.), *Education and Youth Agency*, Advancing Responsible Adolescent Development, DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-33344-1_7

towards higher education? Overall, what is the role of their personal agency within the dynamic structure between home, school, community, culture, and policies?

Educational aspiration is operationalized in this chapter as a desire and an intention towards higher education (Stockfelt, 2015). The term is conceptualized in relation to the literature and the narratives of the participants within the Jamaican research context. I explored these questions in relation to an ethnographic case-study conducted across two schools in urban, Jamaica. Theoretically, Bourdieu's theory of practice and the narratives of the boys themselves were used to discuss boys' educational aspirations and the role of agency in achieving them. The chapter begins with an outline of the background literature used to position and clarify the root of the problem. Bourdieu's theory of practice is then introduced briefly as the theoretical framework but placed within context of the Jamaican situation. The ethnographic approach is described and justified followed by a discussion of the findings rooted in the conceptual and theoretical framework.

Boys' Under-representation in Higher Education

Boys' under-representation is not unique to the Jamaican context but a reflection of a gendered social deviance that seems to be rapidly expanding across various countries globally (Education for All, 2009). Within the Caribbean, the literature attributes this to a variety of historical, cultural, economic and sociological factors. Overall, there seems to be a consensus that boys' under-representation is directly a result of their underachievement at the end of secondary schooling. Underachievement, defined in terms of boys' limited success in the Caribbean Secondary Examination Certificate, is based on Caribbean-wide standardized examinations taken at the end of secondary school across almost all subject areas, in which boys tend to have fewer passes at levels A–C across most subject areas. The Ministry of Education's 2013 results showed that only 37 % of those with five or more subjects at passes A–C were boys (Government of Jamaica, 2013b). This is the standard for matriculating into higher education, with only 3878 males achieving that standard to 7373 females in 2013 (Government of Jamaica, 2013b). Despite this disparity, boys in Jamaica are definitely not marginalized as they assume many leadership posts across social systems. According to Chevannes (2002), regardless of this educational discrepancy, males are usually in roles of power in the homes, schools, churches, and political institutions. For Chevannes, males' underachievement and subsequent under-representation is a case of under-participation, defined as lower enrollment, lower attendance rates and higher dropouts at mid to upper level of secondary schooling (2002). Such assertions in the literature put the focus more on personal agency in relation to other factors, such as the disadvantages experienced from lower socioe-conomic backgrounds. Chevannes (2002, 2005) thesis of male under-participation being a precursor for their under-representation has been supported by research in the literature (Caribbean Community Commission on Youth Development, 2010; Education for All, 2009; Evans, 2000; Ministry of Education

Youth and Culture, 2004; Parry, 1996; United Nation's Office on Drugs and Crime, 2007). The Global Monitoring report (Education for All, 2009) and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Commission on Youth Development report (Caribbean Community Commission on Youth Development, 2010), recognize this as a major problem that results in their eventual discontinuation in the school system.

Historically, some research highlights boys' under-representation as being linked to a gendered view of formal education that has its roots in slavery. According to Beckles (1996), males in Jamaica have undergone a form of hegemony during slavery where their masculinities were negated to an "otherness" not akin to power or glory (Beckles, 1996; Parry, 1996). Slavery existed for over 200 years in Jamaica. During that period, White slave masters had a right to abuse Black men in whatever capacity they chose fit. This was usually undertaken in a brutal manner in a bid to dominate and reduce any possibility of rebellion. According to Beckles (1996), the narratives in the literature of White slave owners showed how effeminate characteristics were transferred to the Black men through a variety of means. These included denying them their roles as fathers and husbands by taking/owning their wives and children. According to Johnson (1996), such practices helped to establish a distinct gender divide in attitudes, with Black men rejecting any behavior seen as "feminine" amongst themselves. Unfortunately, within a modern context, this sometimes has included excelling at formal or traditional schooling. Some sociologists perceive this gender-based view of formal schooling as stemming from cultural practices beginning from primary socialization. Miller (1991, 1992) pioneered the notion of male marginalization through a dominant colonial power impacting the Jamaican subculture. However, this notion has to be visited carefully as it has the potential of vilifying Black girls and further emasculating Black boys by removing their personal agency.

Other sociologists takes a different approach in explaining boys' apparent lack of progress into higher education; that is, boys' are under-participating in schools which leads to their underachievement at the end of secondary schooling and henceforth under-representation. According to the literature, (Bailey, 2003; Chevannes, 2002; Evans, 2000; Figueroa, 2000; Parry, 1996) the Jamaican culture prepares girls for the ethos of schooling that at the same time disadvantages boys. This is a socially constructed "feminized" version where girls co-exist as passive learners and boys are unable to fit in. According to Figueroa (2000), Jamaican males are actually more privileged and are socialized to be dominant, strong and tough. They are expected to be self-sufficient and the provider in their families. For many, schooling is not viewed as means to fulfill this obligation as it is not necessary to increase their earning power. On the other hand, this constructed image sees "femaleness" as sensitive, submissive, and needing protection. This view also sees female upward mobility as tied to their educational achievements and provides a sense of security. Chevannes (2005) theorized this aspect of the culture as stemming from the historical dimension that has infiltrated the home, school, and society.

According to Brown and Chevannes (1998) this gendered aspect of the culture results in parents encouraging more formalized education for girls but practical career-oriented ones for boys. By the time children begin schooling, boys value formal education much less. Brown and Chevannes (1998) view these cultural ideas as continuing within the schools, with boys receiving harsher punishments because of their attitudes to school, resulting in them fulfilling the expectation of being indiscipline and tough. This attitude is adopted by peer culture as well, with positive attitudes to formal schooling viewed sometimes as feminine. Such behavior may include the practice of Jamaican English versus the Jamaican Creole, spending time at home doing homework, conforming to school rules and getting high grades in traditional non-vocational subjects (Bailey, 2003; Brown & Chevannes, 1998; Chevannes, 2002; Evans, 2000; Figueroa, 2000; Miller, 1991). The result is a form of "feminization" of high academic performance that seems to reflect a marginalization that is self-inflicted.

In the literature, the historical and cultural dimensions of boys' under-participation in Jamaica have one thing in common, a consensus tied to a search and a need for economic independence. This might seem contrary since HE is seen as an important factor in development, especially for many low-mid-income countries like Jamaica. However, HE does not necessarily translate to economic independence for many in low-income countries, with a high level of unemployment amongst graduates. In addition, youths (ages 14–25) make up 30 % of the unemployed population. According to the Government of Jamaica (2009a), of the youth population, 26.2 % of the males are illiterate in comparison to only 7.9 % of the females. Of those who dropped out of secondary school, 25 % has below grade 9 level of education (p. 5). The Jamaican government theorized that for many boys from low-income backgrounds in the inner city, crime is seen as a way out of poverty. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2007), through multivariate regression analysis, identified a significant correlation between higher crime rate and lower education levels amongst large numbers of young men in Jamaica, Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago; highlighting the connection between gender, low-level of education and crime. Overall, boys are not transitioning into higher education, which is a problem for the Jamaican government as the future of the country depends heavily on its youth population.

The Role of Policy

At the level of policy, the Jamaican government views this under-representation as impacting the development of the country as a whole. Many studies have established a strong connection between education and development, based on the idea that investing in education will lead to economic growth as measured by the Gross Domestic Product (Cutler, Deaton, & Lleras-Muney, 2006; Hanushek & Wößmann, 2007; Jamison, Jamison, & Hanushek, 2007; Namsuk & Serra-Garcia, 2010; Preston, 2007). In this manner, education is seen as a human capital that will boost development. The Government of Jamaica white paper "Education: The way upward" that was tabled in parliament in 2001 stated, "The building of human and social capital represents our best hope for economic growth and social peace, the major requirements for an improved and sustainable quality of life." It also stated in an earlier format that: "This Green Paper 2000 represents a commitment of the Government of Jamaica to engage our people in the strongest possible partnership for development through education and training" (Ministry of Education, Youth and Culture, 2001). This policy aims to be achieved through an investment in education and skills that matches the current global trend and boosts Jamaica's competitiveness on the global market.

The important role that education plays in relation to economic growth is still evident approximately 10 years later, as presented in the new National Development Plan "Vision 2030 Jamaica," emphasizing a move away from "a lower form of capital" based on Jamaica's natural endowment from the soil and nature, to "higher forms of capital" including "human" and "knowledge." Amongst its many objectives, Vision 2030 aspires towards "world-class education and training" with a minimum requirement that pupils should successfully complete secondary schooling with a proficiency in English Language, mathematics, Information technology, a science, foreign language and a vocational subject (Government of Jamaica, 2009b). This also includes enhancing tertiary level education to establish an "innovative" and "knowledge-based" society. This policy focus on human capital in Jamaica is very much tied into the human capital theory propagated by aid/loan institutions like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund through their establishment of finance driven reforms. These reforms included shifting public spending from higher to lower levels of education and opening the way for the private sector to fund secondary and higher education (Mundy, 2005). This means that parents in Jamaica share the cost of funding education with the government at the secondary level of schooling and to a much greater level at the tertiary. Even with Jamaica's recent middle-income status, this is still problematic as the larger portion of the population is working class. Shifting public spending away from secondary and tertiary levels of education increases social and economic inequalities based on levels of capitals that families have at their disposal to finance education.

Bourdieu Structure and Agency

A key theory utilized in this chapter is that of the French sociologist/anthropologist Pierre Bourdieu. Central to his theory is the notion of agency and structure and the connection between them. According to Bourdieu (1992), agency is the capability to engage in social action while structure consists of both material and symbolic contents co-created by us as agents. This chapter builds on this view of agency to present an extended re-conceptualized version; dynamic and malleable within the structures of the local and international policy context. Bourdieu (1992) views structure as existing when social practice becomes institutionalized into viable systems of power through which and within which agency becomes regulated. However, both agency and structure is united through practice. Practice is action or behavior on the part of agents that occurs consciously or unconsciously, based on habits or experiences, which Bourdieu (1977) defines as "doxa." This concept is used to explain a taken for granted belief, one that is seen as true by a society or a culture. Bourdieu perceives practice as being informed by agency; while at the same time this is limited by the objective structures in place within that culture.

In Jamaica, boys' educational experience is somewhat regulated on one hand by a centralized educational system influenced by top-down international policies from aid/loan organizations (e.g., the International Monetary Fund) and countries (e.g., the United Kingdom, the United States). Top-down is italicized to emphasize a clear-cut system of demand and control with respect to these agencies (Hill, 2014). On the other hand, the Jamaican diaspora exists as a strong form of bottom-up influence from localized agencies; that is, more in tune with family and/or agent-based aspirations. This may at times contradict the local/international educational policy expectations impacting on boys' personal agency. Understanding practice from such a framework includes a deeper exploration of Bourdieu's three key concepts: field, habitus, and capital. According to Bourdieu (1977), habitus are dispositions created within highly prescriptive social structures, i.e., beliefs that become "habituated" through primary and secondary socialization. Bourdieu defines habitus as "the durable installed generative principle of regulated improvisations [which produces] practices" (Webb, 2008, p. 36). These dispositions guide behavior and practice of agents.

Capitals are sources of advantage that is the basis for class differences (Bourdieu, 1986). They are three forms: social, cultural and economic. Social capital are those that create benefits from group memberships; cultural include non-financial assets like education; and economic are those stemming directly from wealth. Bourdieu surmised that both social and cultural capital is transferable to economic capital. Re-conceptualized within the Jamaican and research context, economic capital refers to the boys' socio-economic backgrounds[1] (Stockfelt, 2015, 2016); social capital as type of school (traditional grammar versus newly upgraded—see subsections "Schools"); and cultural capital as beliefs or dispositions towards and about higher education. Social capital was interpreted in this manner due to the level of credence it holds within these boys' educational space. Being included as a member of a traditional high performing school (School A) brand pupils as being smart, with a potential for success; while the latter school (School B) possessed no such value or prestige. Bourdieu views cultural capital in three ways: embodied, objectified and institutionalized. Cultural capital in its embodied form had the most relevance in the study as it focuses on dispositional traits influenced by beliefs.

Field exists as the space within which habitus develops. For Bourdieu, the concept of a field is quite layered and based on the different existing social forces (social structures and capitals) exerting their influence on the agents, internalized to create the habitus, and externalized by the habitus through agency and practice;

---

[1] Measured based on a summary of the following: occupation of parents (usually mothers as the sample reflected the Jamaican context of majority single-mother household), size of family, and number of individuals in one household and the location of their community (see Stockfelt, 2016, for a deeper discussion of SES in this context).

henceforth, exerting its influence within this field. Bourdieu (1990) defines field as structured spaces of positions with its own regulations and tiers of dominance, where agents compete for limited resources. Within the context of this paper, field is operationalized with respect to the educational space where these boys co-exist. I hesitate to label this as "school" as within the Jamaican culture and subculture, formalized education exists in a shared space between the home, school, community, and educational policies. Homework, extra-lessons, and after-school clubs were very much a part of the participants' learning spaces. Bourdieu's thesis perceives agents as being demarcated by their position in relation to their access to resources that confer power and status (capital) (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Their resultant experience based on their level of capital within their field help to define the intrinsic traits (habitus) of the agents themselves. However, within the local context, the Jamaican diaspora exists as an outlier that provides an alternate source of influence and possibilities that help shapes the educational experiences, practice, and agencies of these boys (see summary of findings below).

Ethnographic Approach

Exploring the notion of agency with respect to such a dynamic concept as aspirations requires a bottom-up, detailed qualitative methodology. An ethnographic "approach" was selected due to its bottom-up methodology that engages the researcher and the participants in a meaningful relationship (Samnani & Singh, 2013). Approach is placed in quotation since I moved away from the anthropological roots of ethnography and engaged with the participants in a reflective participatory manner. This is highlighted as the researcher shared much in common culturally with the participants. As a Jamaican, former teacher, and having been educated at numerous levels within Jamaica, I was able to relate to the young men with whom I worked. In addition, a systematic holistic approach was adopted to engage with pupils, teachers, parents and community members in an effort to gain an experiential understanding of the context and subculture in which these boys' educational aspirations were shaped.

The research was conducted between September 2008 and August 2009 across two secondary schools in urban, Jamaica: a traditional high achieving one (School A) and a newly upgraded low achieving school (School B) with high male drop-outs at/near year 9. The main method used was participant observations accompanied by semi/unstructured/narrative focus and one-to-one interviews. Sixty-four participants were included in the study. This is an approximate figure, as with the nature of participant observation, knowledge gained is sometimes through secondary observation and experience with others not directly participating in the study. The participants included mainly pupils with some parents, community members and teachers. The sampling method involved a mixture of snowball, random and purposive sampling. The pupils were selected randomly across year groups 7–11, the parents and teachers were selected purposively based on the involvement of their offspring/pupils, and community members were selected mainly through snowball sampling. Most of these group interviews were supported by random discussions at different time periods across both schools and throughout the research to ascertain a deeper level of understanding. The data were analyzed thematically using Nvivo for managing the dataset.

Jamaica has different types of secondary schools. Two main types were the focus of the study: traditional grammar and newly upgraded. These were selected as they represented two main contrasts within the Jamaican school system. Traditional grammar schools are those that have always been secondary schools and usually host pupils with the highest passes from the grade six achievement test. This is a standardized test taken at the end of primary schooling that determines which "type" of secondary school pupils are sent to. Pupils with the lowest scores are usually sent to newly upgraded or junior secondary (secondary schools that stops at year 9). In this manner, the education system creates a clear demarcation from the outset based on standardized grades. These grade six achievement test results are indirectly interpreted as measures of ability as pupils are grouped accordingly in a process known as streaming (Evans, 2000). An added consequence of this is a clear demarcation between the pupils based on social-class—or in a Bourdieuian context, economic capital. Pupils from lower socio-economic backgrounds tended to perform much worse at the secondary level, which creates further segregation as schools also practice internal streaming where pupils are grouped annually based on an end of year examination. The result is higher dropout rates for boys from lower socio-economic backgrounds at newly upgraded schools. School A represents a high status traditional school, while School B represented a lower status school with lower attainment at the Caribbean Secondary Education exams and higher drop-out rates for boys. This contrast was purposive to provide a comparative element in an attempt to understand the nature of boys' educational aspirations and the role of their agencies within their educational field.

Influence of Schools, Community and Family on Boys' Educational Aspirations

School, community and the family were identified as social structures that had the strongest impact on boys' personal agencies with respect to having educational aspirations. Boys regaled the positive impact of their maternal families, the negative impact of their communities and the surprising almost non-existent impact of their schools—except for the level of social capital it provided—as the reason for, or not, having educational aspirations. The positive role of maternal family had the strongest representation in the narratives, highlighted in its role in motivating educational aspirations and shaping positive dispositional beliefs about the role of higher education. These boys with maternal family support expressed strong desires/intentions to complete secondary school and move into higher education to establish careers, professions, or skills. This also includes further practical education, which for many without the economic means of financing university, was a way of staying in formal education and establishing viable careers for themselves. The inclusion of family members in the Jamaican diaspora in the United Kingdom, the United States, and Canada was quite common and represented an extension of their maternal family. For those boys with educational aspirations educational aspirations, their maternal family (locally and overseas) facilitated their agency by providing economic support and motivation, thereby allowing them to realize this.

The narratives surrounding the community included a tragic mix of fear of death and violence impacting their academic performance; as well as exemplary role models that motivated their educational aspirations. The role of the community as a deterrent to educational aspirations came mainly from boys in the inner city from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Their stories included intense fear of: being killed in gang-related activities when communities were at war; and being forced to drop out of school and join gangs to "protect" their communities or avenge the death of loved-ones and community members. In addition, many of these boys were unable to relate to success stories of higher education from within their communities—with the exception of community members that had migrated. An extended aspect of this theme involved an altruistic view of education for the greater good, linked to citizenship values that these boys "owned." Citizenship values emerged as a narrative of education being important for themselves as agents, their families, wider communities and the nation as a whole. As one young man commented:

> Miss, our (Jamaican) motto says out of many we are one people… Jamaica nah (not) go betta (better) unless we fix it… Right now, mi (my) mother deh a foreign a wash people dirty clothes fi (for) years fi (to) make sure me can get a good education…

Such ideas were common amongst participants across different backgrounds/schools and highlighted two subthemes in relation to citizenship values. These values seemed to exist in isolation with respect to many boys from School B (lower attaining school) and those from lower socio-economic backgrounds. That is, they echoed these sentiments in relation to it being an ideal, an existence within a world where they all had the same level of capitals and henceforth opportunities. However, in practice they exhibited limited tolerance of education as seen in their lower participation in their school's day-to-day activities, and evidenced in their lack of educational aspirations. Additionally, these values reflected those embedded within the educational policies (see below), however, boys' "ownership" of them is related to the diaspora instead of the actual policies. "Foreign" is the Jamaican vernacular expression for the diasporic space that is usually the United Kingdom, Canada, and the United States. The above quote highlights the boy's respect and appreciation of his mother's hard labor (as a domestic worker) in the diaspora to boost economic capital and create a competitive opportunity for him through education.

The narrative about the role of the school in educational aspirations was astonishingly limited. When mentioned, boys tended to relate some positive and negative experiences with teachers that confirmed their already existing view of education as being important or pointless. At face value, this gave the impression that the role of school was minimal. However, what became apparent during follow-up interviews was the importance of the type of school these boys attended. This was already informed from the literature on streaming, however, as discussed below, boys exhibited different values toward education based on the schools they were affiliated with.

The Boys' Stories

The results of the study showed no comparative difference across both schools in the nature of these boys' educational aspirations. Their educational aspirations were goal-oriented and based on an instrumental view of higher education as a means to help them realize their life aspirations. In this manner, it was based on a desire and an intention towards higher education but the onus was more on an intention as most see higher education in terms of its transferability to economic and/or social capital. In doing so, boys tended to place the onus of their educational aspirations on themselves, in this manner showing ownership of their agencies within the institutions of homes, schools, and communities. As one boy stated:

> Miss, we come here fi (to) drink milk, wi (we) nuh (do not) come here fi count cow; so mi (me) haffi (have to) work hard fi get weh (where) mi a go. Education a my milk, a nobody decision but my own whether mi go college or not… Some a dem (these) bwoy (boys) yah (here) a just a waste time… Fi dem choice!

Such sentiments were echoed by a majority across both schools. However, many from school B, the lower status school, tended to ascribe to the following:

> Yeah, a my decision (intention), but at the end of the day, what's the point? My teacher have up her degree and she live inna (in) my community (poor inner-city community)… Mi nah go bruk nobody house mek (so) police come shoot mi, but might as well go hustle (join the small informal business sector)… Education nuh (do not) mek (make) no (any) money unless yuh name Mr. So-and-So (implies a male that is wealthy) or yuh deh a foreign. (Jamaican diaspora of the United States of America, United Kingdom, and Canada)

Implicit within this argument and the narratives was the idea that having limited economic capital interacts with the transferability of higher education to wealth; therefore they felt as if they were exercising their personal agency by choosing not to have educational aspirations. The problem with such a viewpoint is that agency in such a context is not freely acted, but it is hindered by their perception of and/or actual position within that field and their belief about how this impacts them. Indirectly, their beliefs about the value of higher education is based on their view of social class, as both an economic and a social capital, as many viewed it as an exclusive group that replicates the social-structure that they have experienced within the confines of the inner-city. To elaborate, another boy explained:

> Miss, mi neva see nobody from my community get rich from college yet! Well, unless dem run (athletics) or play ball (football)… Sometimes yuh just tie yourself in debt and then yuh can't get a job… Unless embassy free yuh up. (implying migrating to the Jamaican diaspora)

In this manner, they related to their primary and secondary experience and observation of and with higher education within their community to make—what they perceived as—an informed decision about their intention towards higher education. Such arguments connect with Bourdieu's critique of the space of school, that it reproduces social inequalities (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). According to Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), education operates as a source of social control in its reproduction of social structures by the dominant class who utilizes their power to ensure schools operated in this manner. Pupils begin schooling on unequal footing based on their level of cultural capital. Schools do nothing to offset this, but instead reward those with higher capitals, henceforth increasing and maintaining inequalities. Working class pupils are theorized as passively accepting their "failure" based on class disadvantages, or establishing counter-school cultures as a form of resistance. Whatever their "choice" the outcome still results in reinforcing their subordinate positions.

The problem with this critique of the space of school within the Jamaican context was the fact that some boys across both schools, who were from lower socio-economic backgrounds, also had educational aspirations. The main reason provided in the narratives was what I referred to as *deferred higher educational aspirations* (Stockfelt, 2016). This is a term that was coined in relation to the result of the study that showed some boys across both schools reporting educational aspirations if the opportunity to migrate to the Jamaican diaspora presented itself. Boys who demonstrated and narrated this phenomena justified this based on their experience of witnessing family/community members becoming economically and socially successful through education only after migrating to these higher income countries and receiving an education. Here, boys did not demonstrate a passive acceptance of the rules of their field, neither failing nor rebelling, but aspiring towards a route not written into the script of their school but very common within their home/community environments. That is, Jamaica has a large diaspora in the United Kingdom, the United States, and Canada. The diaspora exists as an alternate form of income that provides economic capital to families and the country on a whole through remittance (McLean, 2008). According to McLean (2008), the diaspora accounted for 15.3 % of Jamaica's Gross Domestic Product in 2007. This figure was higher than Bauxite and tourism, which are two of Jamaica's main sources of income. The impact of the diaspora goes beyond the economic to encourage the development of cultural capital in its embodied state. This was identified within the narrative based on the constant encouragement and support provided by relatives in the diaspora to ensure the educational success of their younger family members in Jamaica. According to most boys, the diaspora echoes the message of "education for the greater good," "education to boost Jamaica's global competitiveness," "education to reduce crime/violence," and "education for personal/financial growth/gain." Participants at School A identified and echoed this in their narratives. This also occurred at School B, but viewed by many participants as "true" only if one migrated to the diaspora itself, or if one hailed from a higher social-class.

In many ways, the message from the diaspora supports the perspectives in the local educational policies. However, it seems to do so from a bottom-up practical view of education as a way to counteract the socio-economic inequalities within the society that were reproduced within the educational field of these boys.

Policy Perspective

Educational aspirations are multi-dimensional and develop throughout the socialization process within these boys' educational field, limited by the governing political and economic situation; that is, policies relating to cost sharing of secondary/tertiary education and the country's economic downturn, which decreases opportunities for employment. As reflected in the discussion so far, education was only viewed as a capital for these boys insofar as their perception of its transferability to economic and social capital. This revealed a discrepancy between a top-down policy implementation towards education for development, and the targeted "at-risk" boys' limited view and experience of it. That is, boys aspired towards schooling and higher education if they perceived it as a route to realize their wider life aspirations. "Life aspiration" is used here in reference to their overall and most distinctive goals and desires for the future—both intrinsic and extrinsic life goals. Intrinsic life goals are those stemming from the self and motivated from within, for example, goals like becoming the best they can be and pro-social ones like helping their family, community or their country (citizenship values) (Ryan, Huta, & Deci, 2008; Williams, Hedberg, Cox, & Deci, 2000). Extrinsic life goals were those based on outside motivation, like life aspirations towards wealth, fame and power (Kasser & Ryan, 1996). As explained by a boy from the inner-city at School A:

> All this war, killing and violence, not putting anything any better… I want to become a soldier, help people, help the community, stop the crime and all that stuff that has been going on in this country… That's why I need the subjects (getting the 5 A-C's synonymous with high attainment), you need this to go university and to get in the army… I need to educate myself so I can teach the little youths them… That was our parents responsibility, nuff (lots) a them failed, so it's up to us… Jamaica is up to us.

Such beliefs exhibit educational aspirations built on pro-social goals and feelings of responsibilities towards their immediate and local communities. Here boys voiced an intention towards higher education despite being disadvantaged by limited economic and social capitals. At School A, such ideas were usually accompanied by highly embodied cultural capital exhibited in their avid belief in the exchangeability of higher education for social and economic advancement. However, as mentioned earlier (see summary of findings), some boys—with limited economic and social capital—echoed this view but were more motivated by extrinsic life goals. At School B, these boys tended to have lower levels of embodied cultural capitals, that is, did not see higher education as being instrumental in attaining economic and social advancement. These boys represented the "at risk" category that is the target of many government policies to increase development and reduce crime rates.

Boys' educational aspirations become more complex when evaluating from the global perspective. The role of the diaspora existed as an anomaly that boosted the idea and the feasibility of boys having educational aspirations based on its narrative of education for socio-economic advancement. However, within the local context, this conflicted with the increased burden of the cost of higher education and taxation experienced by the private sector, i.e., a belief in the role of higher education unsupported by the reduced ability to support this. Such burden is a reflection of the overarching global trends and "tied" policies in relation to education and human development (Sullivan & Shreffin, 2003). For example, Jamaica receives loans from the International Monetary Fund based on a conditionality of acceptance of its neoliberal policies including those connected to education (International Monetary Fund, 2011; Johnston & Montecino, 2011). Jamaica also receives similar influence from the human capital agenda through aid/loan from the World Bank (World Bank, 2009). These reforms are sometimes seen as a deterrent to development as it limits the government expenditure on education, increase taxes and freeze wages; measures that may have a demoralizing impact on an already weak economy and structures (Johnston & Montecino, 2011). The result is a limited economy that in turn limits the experiences, possibilities and personal agency of the targeted population—youths.

As reported in the Jamaica Gleaner (Clarke, 2011), Mark Weisbrot, the director for the Centre for Economic and Policy Research, a think tank stated that, "Jamaica is a clear case where the International Monetary Fund and other international actors have put the economy in a straitjacket" (Clarke, 2011). This was further elaborated in the actual report by Centre for Economic and Policy Research concluding that:

> Jamaica's agreement with the IMF has included pro-cyclical macroeconomic policies during the current downturn. This unfavorable policy mix risks perpetuating an unsustainable cycle where public spending cuts lead to low growth, exacerbating the public debt burden and eventually leading to further cuts and even lower growth. (p. 19)

The International Monetary Fund agreement with Jamaica, places a high burden of taxation on a struggling private sector (parents) that is also "encouraged" by the World Bank to help finance higher education. The Government of Jamaica has abolished tuition fees at the secondary level of schooling to increase the quantity of the student population and meet their target for improved participation (Government of Jamaica, 2009b). However, while doing so, it reduced the subsidiary to HE and to payment of external examinations at the secondary level (Jamaica Observer, 2010). In addition, secondary schools still charge a fee equivalent to tuition, usually disguised as "maintenance" since the government has not provided proper replacement for the loss of this income. Overall, this situation creates a clear discrepancy between the view of education as an instrument for development and the reality of students/families that are expected to finance this. Overall, the discrepancy between these two opposing principles, created by the overarching local (and global) political and economic situation impacted these boys educational field and placed a strain on the quality of education offered, as schools, staff, students and their families sometimes existed under economically and socially strenuous circumstances.

A male student's educational experience is related to the level of economic capital he has at his disposal. Evaluated within the context of this study, it is unsurprising that boys' educational aspirations are based on their instrumental view of its transferability to economic capital. If boys are unable to connect education to their wider aspirations, it is unlikely that they will aspire accordingly. The narratives showed a tendency of boys from lower socio-economic background and lower performing school (School B) has having educational aspirations that were contingent on the broader socio-economic environment. These pupils reported weaker beliefs in the value of education within the Jamaican context where many had no intention to move on to higher education and in extreme cases expressed the desire to drop out of secondary school altogether. This goes to the root of Jamaica's problem with boys' poorer participation in school and representation at the tertiary level. The government's abolishment of tuition fees at the secondary level of schooling was a step forward in terms of supporting their view of education as a means to enhance development, both on the part of pupils and for the country on a whole. It can be said—based on the result of this study—that these boys shared a similar and also different view of education to that of the government. The similarity existed in their instrumental view of education, i.e., its potential for intrinsic and extrinsic growth. However, they differed based on their extrinsic reality and beliefs about the value of education. Their extrinsic reality included not only their limited economic capital and sharing the cost of education, but their level of social capital is dependent on the "value" of their school within their educational field. Such capital is based on the view that these group memberships inferred limited academic ability and less potential for success through education. This view is not farfetched since, according to Evans (2000) and Bailey (2003), traditional grammar schools far outshine newly upgraded high schools on the major standardized high school examinations—the Caribbean Examination Council exams (now Caribbean Secondary Education exams). Bailey (2003) further elaborated that attaining five passes—including mathematics, English language and Information Technology—is connected to future attainment. Such perspectives are called upon in the government strategies supporting education as a human capital critical for development (Government of Jamaica, 2009a, 2009b).

The educational field that is comprised of structures of the family, school, community and the government (through educational policies) provides the context through which socialization occurs and dispositional beliefs about/towards higher education are shaped. These experiences are shared in a form of "class habitus" where boys' personal agency is mutually limited by their level of capitals in a false sense of autonomy; i.e., the view that practice is based on their personal agency. Personal agency is one of the ingredients behind them having educational aspirations or not, however, this is limited not only by their level of capital but also by the regulating structures with their educational field. The family and diaspora are structures that help to provide a route for boys to exercise their agency. However, the complex dynamic between the various structures within their educational field seems to result in a dynamic personal agency dependent on their perception of the possibilities, such as that evidenced in their *deferred higher educational aspirations*.

Discussion

Boys' agency is limited by the social structures within their educational field. This in turn affects practice, mediated by educational aspirations. Based on the nature of these boys' educational aspirations—goal-oriented, practical and connected to their life-aspirations—it seems necessary for them to see the link between schooling, education and practice in order for them to "have it." For example, in relation to the current global trend, the Jamaican government needs to focus more on skill-based education to enhance practical knowledge and increase employability. Therefore, at the school-level, it is critical to flag the importance of a skill-based further education along with higher education; to make clear the connection between education/

schooling and possible future outcome; and to expose boys to other possibilities or success stories of higher education outside of what they have experienced within their communities.

The significant influence of the family and community highlights the need to focus more on home-school-community cooperation. This could range from an active Parents Teachers Association to programs where relevant parents/community members could share their stories of success/failures, hopes/regrets with boys. Such real life stories may help to connect the content learnt in school, their level of participation and the decisions they make about the future with that of their "real world." In this manner, making the connection between education and possible outcome as well as incorporating the family and the community. Such a venture could be more beneficial if the family/community of the diaspora were also involved in the process. This is quite relevant as most participants in the study identified a direct contact and positive influence of some family member(s) (and community) from the diaspora on their educational experiences and aspirations. Therefore, the diaspora could be incorporated more at the level of schools. This effort would match the government's objectives and reduce the possibilities of boys dropping out of the school system, joining gangs, and increasing the country's economic and social burden.

Finally, at the policy level, educational policies might be more effective if they match the needs of the target population. In this manner, understanding the educational aspirations of these boys and finding ways to reduce the negative impact of limited capitals. For example, removing the practice of streaming pupils both at the beginning and during secondary schooling. Studies have consistently highlighted the positive impact of mixed-ability classes and the negative impact of streaming (Boaler, 2008; Higgins, Kokotsaki, & Coe, 2012). In addition, more needs to be done about providing materials like access to computers, after-school homework clubs etc., to make it feasible for boys disadvantaged by limited economical capital to thrive. The Government of Jamaica has attempted to improve instructional material—like access to computers—as stated in their policy (Government of Jamaica, 2009b). The impact of this is yet to be seen.

Conclusion

The chapter utilizes the literature to provide a detailed analysis of reasons for boys' under-representation in higher educational institutions in Jamaica. It offers an added explanation about the nature of boys' educational aspirations based on the findings of a study conducted across two very different schools in urban Jamaica. The findings are discussed in relation to Bourdieu's concept of structure and agency and the role these play in guiding practice. Boys' educational aspirations were shown to be goal-oriented, and based on a practical view of higher education in its transferability to economic and social capital. That is, boys tended to have educational aspirations insofar as their view of it as being instrumental for social and economic advancement. Generally, fewer boys from the lower status/achieving school (School B) and lower socio-economic backgrounds perceived higher education as important in the success of their life aspirations and tended not to have educational aspirations. The exceptions were those with deferred educational aspirations, encouraged by the Jamaican diaspora in the United Kingdom, the United States, and Canada. Overall, boys' agency to have and achieve educational aspirations or not is limited by social structures in relation to their level of capital within their educational field. However, the family and the Jamaican diaspora provide alternate possibilities that can counteract the disadvantages experienced from limited capitals and in turn can impact boys' personal agency.

References

Bailey, B. (2003). *Gender sensitive educational policy and practice: The case of Jamaica*. Kingston, Jamaica: UNESCO.

Beckles, H. (1996). *Proceedings from the West Indies Centre for Gender and Development Symposium: Black masculinity in Caribbean slavery*. Trinidad and Tobago: St. Augustine.

Boaler, J. (2008). Promoting 'relational equity' and high mathematics achievement through an innovative mixed-ability approach. *British Educational Research Journal, 34*, 167–194.

Bourdieu, P. (1977). *Outline of a theory of practice*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. G. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1990). *Sociology in question*. Cambridge, England: Polity Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1992). *Logics of practice* (R. Nice, Trans.). Cambridge, England: Polity Press.

Bourdieu, P., & Passeron, J. (1977). *Reproduction in education, society and culture*. London, England: Sage.

Bourdieu, P., & Wacquant, L. (1992). *An invitation to reflexive sociology*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Brown, J., & Chevannes, B. (1998). *Why men stay so?* Mona, Jamaica: University of the West Indies.

Caribbean Community Commission on Youth Development. (2010). *Eye on the future: Investing in youth now for tomorrow's community*. Georgetown, Guyana: Caribbean Community Commission on Youth Development.

Chevannes, B. (2002). What you wow is what you reap: Violence and the construction of the male identity in Jamaica. *Comparative Education, 2*(1), 51–61.

Chevannes, B. (2005). *Boys left out, from 'Gender achievements and prospects in education: The gap report'*. New York, NY: The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). Retrieved December 15, 2015, from http://www.ungei.org/gap/interviewsChevannes.html.

Clarke, L. (2011, May 6). *Think tank says IMF agreement bad for Jamaica.* Retrieved December 11, 2015, from http://jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20110506/business/business7.html.

Cutler, D., Deaton, A., & Lleras-Muney, A. (2006). The determinants of mortality. *Journal of Economic Perspectives, 20*(3), 97–120.

Education for All. (2009). *Overcoming inequality—Why governance matters. Education for All: Global monitoring report.* Retrieved July 15, 2015, from http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0017/001776/177683e.pdf.

Evans, H. (2000). *Gender differences in education in Jamaica*. Kingston, Jamaica: Planning Institute of Jamaica and UNESCO.

Figueroa, M. (2000). Making sense of male experience: The case of academic underachivement in the English-speaking Caribbean. *IDS Bulletin, 31*(2), 68–74.

Government of Jamaica. (2009a). *National report of Jamaica on the Millenium Development Goals*. Kingston, Jamaica: Planning Institute of Jamaica and Ministry of Foriegn Affairs and Foriegn Trade, Government of Jamaica.

Government of Jamaica. (2009b). *Vision 2030 Jamaica: National development plan*. Kingston, Jamaica: Government of Jamaica Planning Institute.

Government of Jamaica. (2013a). *A new approach: National security policy for Jamaica*. Kingston, Jamaica: The Government of Jamaica.

Government of Jamaica. (2013b). *Caribbean secondary education certificate (CSEC) examination 2013: Analysis of the public schools' performance.* Kingston, Jamaica: GOJ: Ministry of Education. Retrieved July 15, 2015, from http://www.moe.gov.jm/sites/default/files/2013%20CSEC%20Report_0.pdf.

Hanushek, E. A., & Wößmann, L. (2007). *Education quality and economic growth*. Washington, DC: The World Bank.

Higgins, S., Kokotsaki, D., & Coe, R. (2012). The teaching and learning toolkit. *Education Endowment Foundation and Sutton Trust*. Retrieved December 15, 2015, from https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/uploads/pdf/Technical_Appendices_(July_2012).pdf.

Hill, M. (2014). *Policy process: A reader* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.

International Monetary Fund. (2011). *Jamaica: Third review under the stand-by arrangement staff report; informational annex; staff supplement; and the press release on the executive board discussion (No. Country Report No. 11/49)*. Washington, DC: International Monetary Fund.

Jamaica Observer. (2010, January 27). Opposition concerns about impact of IMF on education. *The Jamaica Observer Online.* Retrieved December 11, 2015, from http://go-jamaica.com/news/read_article.php?id=16363.

Jamison, E., Jamison, D., & Hanushek, E. (2007). The effects of education quality on income growth and mortality decline. *Economics of Education Review, 6*(26), 771–788.

Jha, J., & Kelleher, F. (2006). *Boys' underachievement in education: An exploration in selected commonwealth countries*. Vancouver, BC, Canada: Commonwealth Secretariat and Commonwealth of Learning.

Johnson, U. (1996). *Proceedings from the West Indies Centre for Gender and Development Symposium: The reconstruction of masculinity: Breaking the link between maleness and violence*. Trinidad and Tobago: St. Augustine.

Johnston, J., & Montecino, J. (2011). *Jamaica: Macroeconomic policy, debt and the IMF*. Washington, DC: Center for Economic and Policy Research.

Kasser, T., & Ryan, R. (1996). Further examining the American dream: Differential correlates of intrinsic and extrinsic goals. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 3*(22), 280–287.

McLean, E. A. (2008). *An investigation of recent trends in the remittance industry: Evidence from Jamaica*. Kingston, Jamaica: Bank of Jamaica.

Miller, E. (1991). *Marginalisation of the Black Jamaican male*. Kingston, Jamaica: Jamaica Publishing House Ltd.

Miller, E. (1992). *Men at risk*. Kingston, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press.

Ministry of Education, Youth and Culture. (2001). *White paper: The way upward*. Kingston, Jamaica: Ministry of Education Youth and Culture. Retrieved January 20, 2009, from http://www.moeyc.gov.jm/policies/whitepaper.shtml.

Ministry of Education, Youth and Culture. (2004). *The development of education: National report of Jamaica.* Retrieved January 20, 2009, from www.ibe.unesco.org/National_Reports/ICE_2004/jamaica.pdf.

Mundy, K. (2005). Globalization and educational change: New policy worlds. In A. Bascia, A. Datnoa, K. Leithwood, & D. Livingstone (Eds.), *International handbook of education policy* (pp. 1–17). Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer.

Namsuk, K., & Serra-Garcia, M. (2010). *The effects of the economic crisis on the well-being of households in Latin America and the Caribbean*. New York, NY: United Nations Development Programme.

Parry, O. (1996). In one ear and out the other: Unmasking masculinities in the Caribbean classroom. *Sociological Research Online*. Retrieved December 11, 2015, from http://www.socresonline.org.uk/1/2/2.html.

Preston, S. (2007). The changing relation between mortality and level of economic development. *International Journal of Epidemiology, 3*(36), 484–490.

Ryan, R. M., Huta, V., & Deci, E. (2008). Living well: A self-determination theory perspective on eudaimonia. *Journal of Happiness Studies, 1*(9), 139–170.

Samnani, A. K., & Singh, P. (2013). Exploring the fit perspective: An ethnographic approach. *Human Resource Management, 52*(1), 123–144.

Stockfelt, S. (2015). Capital, agency, family and the diaspora: An exploration of boys' aspirations towards higher education in urban Jamaica. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education, 45*(1), 5–25. doi:10.1080/03057925.2013.812426.

Stockfelt, S. (2016). Economic, social and embodied cultural capital as shapers and predictors of boys' educational aspirations. *The Journal of Educational Research*. doi:10.80/00220671.2014.968911.

Sullivan, A., & Shreffin, S. (2003). *Economics: Principles in action*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall.

United Nation's Office on Drugs and Crime. (2007). *Crime, violence, and development: Trends, costs, and policy options in the Caribbean.* United Nation Office on Drugs and Crime and the Latin America and Caribbean Region of the World Bank.

Webb, J. S. (2008). *Understanding Bourdieu*. London, England: Sage.

Williams, G. C., Hedberg, V., Cox, E., & Deci, E. (2000). Extrinsic life goals and health-risk behaviours in adolescents. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 8*(30), 1756–1771.

World Bank. (2009). *Jamaica-World Bank group country partnership strategy: 2010–2013 (consultation report)*. Kingston, Jamaica: World Bank International Finance Corporation.