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# Dutty Wine: Ooman Big Up or Dis?

Nicole Cruz  
*SIT Study Abroad*

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# Dutty Wine Ooman Big Up or Dis?

Nicole Cruz

Advisor: Donna P. Hope

Program Director: Shirley Campbell

SIT Jamaica: Gender and Development

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**Abstract:**

This study explores the extent to which females are liberated or oppressed in dancehall in Kingston, Jamaica. Using a qualitative approach and feminist perspective, I explore dancehall culture and the ghetto communities on which it centers. Participant observation allowed me to experience the dynamics of the dancehall space. Using in-depth interviews, I assessed my observations with the opinions of dancehall fans and other community members. Ultimately, it becomes clear in this study that though heterosexual females are liberated with their freedom of sexual expression, dancehall is still has a deeply patriarchal structure. Heterosexual males dominate dancehall by oppressing heterosexual females, refusing to acknowledge the sexuality of homosexual females, and strongly stigmatizing homosexual males.

## **Acknowledgements**

I owe a large amount of gratitude to everyone who inspired and assisted me in my first independent research project. Without the guidance I received from people with more academic and dancehall experience than me this paper could not exist.

I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Donna P. Hope, for her guidance in the research and writing of my study. She cannot imagine how much she helped because she was impacting me before we met. Her book *Inna di Dancehall: Popular Culture and the Politics of Identity in Jamaica* served as my dancehall bible throughout my research. In fact, I might not have researched dancehall at all if that wasn't the first book I read about it. Her intelligence and thorough knowledge on the topic, combined with her personal love for dancehall, made her a great resource for my study. Thank you, Dr. Hope, for inspiring and advising one of the most challenging projects of my life.

I also owe a huge debt of gratitude to my unofficial advisors, Mousey and Juggla. They made me feel welcome in the dancehall and in the communities, even when police officers did the opposite. They told me when to be where, and made my research fun. Sometimes they forced me to break out of my shell and participate in the dances, even if it meant physically holding me in front of a camera while the mic man yelled at me to dutty wine. Without Mousey and Juggla I wouldn't have learned all of the details about dancehall that I did, including the names of each individual dance, and the best artists to download. They took professional styled photographs for my paper, and set up almost all of my interviews. However, what is most important to me is that they are great friends who I will miss dearly when I return home.



And what would the acknowledgements be without Shirley Campbell, who told me to write them? I would not know how to write a proper research paper or conduct qualitative research without her. But that is the least important contribution she has made to my semester. She introduced me to Jamaican life and forced me to push outside my comfort zone for rewarding experiences. Her constructive criticism forced me to think thoroughly and critically about things I had previously taken for granted. Thank you, Shirley, for making my first trip outside my country an amazing one.

My host family was integral in my adjustment to Jamaican culture. From Patios to taxis to important political issues, they taught me what I needed to know. I swear I am sincere when I say that if I could have chosen a host family on my own, I would have still lived with you. Thank you, Myrna, Janelle, Sue and Jessie, for giving me a fun, comfortable home until I was ready to be on my own.

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**Definitions****Terms:**

Battyman/Battyboy/Chi chi man: slang terms used to describe a homosexual male

Big up: to give recognition to; usually used in a public announcement to recognize a person or group, i.e. “big up di independent woman” or “big up Bounty Killer”

Bullet Bullet: sometimes expressed by the onomatopoeia “bwaa bwaa,” this expression is used to simulate gun shots. It may be used as a symbolic gun salute, or to signify shooting a person.

Dancehall space: the location at which a party takes place and dancehall participants interact

Gun lyrics: lyrics expressing physical violence toward others

Party: in this paper “party” will refer to a planned dancehall event, occurring in the street unless otherwise stated, that is planned and run by professionals

Slackness: sexually explicit language, action, or attire

Wine: a type of dance in which the pelvis is gyrated and/or rotated

**People:**

Dancehall queen: professional female dancer who competes and earns the title of the best dancer in her community

Deejay: artist who performs dancehall songs

Mic man: a male role with the main purpose of creating hype. The mic man uses a microphone to prompt the crowd to perform certain dance moves, big up members of the community, and set the direction of the party.

Selector: almost always a male, the selector chooses and plays the music at a party

Video man: video tapes the party and then sells the video abroad to Jamaican immigrants and interested foreigners

**Concepts:**

Dancehall: more than just a genre of music or style of dance, dancehall is a culture that has its own norms which at the same time reflect and clash with traditional Jamaican society.

Ghetto: an urban community of low socioeconomic class. Such communities are also referred to by society as the inner city, garrison, or downtown. This paper will refer to these communities as “ghettos” because that is the term most commonly used by the people living in the areas of Kingston that I studied. It is important to note that in Jamaica the people of the ghetto tend to have the darkest complexions. They are stereotyped by the larger Jamaican society as being racially, culturally, and morally inferior. However, the term “ghetto” has an alternate meaning for the people living in the communities. For them, it does not have these connotations and is often used with pride. This paper will use the term as it is defined by the people who live there.

Liberation: Whether or not this study finds women to be liberated or oppressed in the dancehall will depend largely on the definition of liberation. In one sense “liberation” can mean complete freedom, while in another case it can be used just to mean more freedom than in an alternate situation. When deciding which definition to use in my study, I considered which definition is used more often. I believe this is the second definition because people are rarely in a situation where



they have absolutely no social constraints (laws, social consequences for their actions, etc.). Therefore, when I say an experience or action is liberating for women it does not mean that it eliminates patriarchy altogether or reverses the gender hierarchy. It just means that women are freed from part of their oppression.

Oppression: The intentional or unintentional exploitation of one group of people by another using ideological, socioeconomic, or physical means.

Uptown: urban communities of middle or upper socioeconomic class

## **Introduction**

Since the age of two, one of my biggest hobbies has been dancing. In Jamaica, I naturally gravitated toward the dance style that is most popular at this time: dancehall. Initially interested in it just for fun, I gradually learned that dancehall is intertwined with social and political controversies facing Jamaican society. Its historical influences reach at least as far back as the slave trade, and extend to the events of the last few decades<sup>2</sup>we<sup>3</sup>. After learning about the cultural significance of dancehall, I became particularly interested in its impact on women. Academics studying the issue argue about the degree to which dancehall has a liberating or oppressive impact on females. My experience in the dancehall left me feeling a little bit of both. Thus, after first participating in the dancehall culture as a leisure activity, I decided to make it my area of research.

A further reason for studying dancehall is that I have a personal interest in issues of inequality and oppression. Dancehall culture rebels against oppression. I also believe that literature on inner city communities tends to focus on problems while neglecting the positive aspects of the community. Therefore, when I study inner city communities I like to highlight their strengths, and I believe dancehall might be one of them.

Before explaining my research, I must admit to several biases that I carry with me. First, dancing has had a very positive impact on my life, and I therefore need to be conscious of situations in which I assume this effect is universal. Second, dance for me has always been more symbolic than literal. The aggressive nature of step “battles” or the sensual pelvic winds of bolero don’t influence me to engage more violent or promiscuous behaviors. I therefore do not have the same shock or emotional response

that others describe when they experience violent or sexual gestures and lyrics in dancehall. I am further biased in my discussion because I am from the United States and grew up with a different culture than most dancehall participants. I may feel liberated or oppressed because I interpret my experiences by my culture, while the same experiences have different meanings for other participants.

In this paper, dancehall is viewed through my American female eyes. I have a working class background in Long Island, New York, but now live a middle class lifestyle as a college student. I am a Brandeis University student, though I have also studied in Washington, DC. In Washington I spent a lot of my time in the inner city because I did a small research paper on one of its communities, tutored at one of the high schools, and had an internship at one of the elementary schools. For my internship I created and led after school programs for third and fourth graders. While my experiences with inner city communities have been a second source of motivation for my project on dancehall, they also may be a source of bias. I have views and opinions on issues regarding inner cities in my country that I will have to put aside as I study the inner cities of Jamaica. It may be tempting to generalize because many of the stereotypes about inner cities are similar, but I recognize that I am in a different culture and need to explore the situation with fresh eyes.

I allow my interests to converge in this paper as I explore the controversial issue of female liberation, or lack thereof, in the dancehall. My hypothesis is that while there may be more freedom of expression in the dancehall for women, ultimately they are still oppressed by men.

**Literature Review and Theoretical Framework:**

Dancehall in Jamaica has evolved into its own culture (Lindsay). Many traditional Jamaican norms (for those in power, at least) are inapplicable in the dancehall space. One such norm is gender roles. Supporters argue that gender inequalities are diminished in the dancehall; women are liberated in the dancehall space. Females are free to express their sexuality and pride for their bodies. Opponents feel that patriarchal gender roles of the community are reflected in the dancehall. Sexual liberation exists, but it is to the benefit of men who are able to enjoy the scantily clad women dancing provocatively. Women are objectified and degraded according to this viewpoint. While this debate is the focus of this paper, it is necessary to take a step back and understand dancehall at a more profound level before issues of gender are explored.

Dancehall emerged directly from the political and social turmoil of the late 1970s and early 1980s. In the 1970s, Michael Manley had improved the conditions of most Jamaicans by implementing socialist legislation. It was a change supported by many Jamaicans. However harsh conditions of the mid 1970s due to the sudden increase in OPEC oil prices set the stage for a miserable 1980s. By the early 1980s, the administration had changed and international pressure led to changes in governmental policies, which in turn caused increased poverty. Prices increased on necessities such as food and health care. Simultaneously, social institutions and the standard of living deteriorated. This deterioration had an especially severe effect in the ghettos (Hope 2004, 2006; Cooper 2004). Many Jamaicans were forced into informal employment to feed themselves and their families. Hope notes that “[f]ormal employment fell from 60.4

per cent in 1977 to 53.3 per cent in 1989, while informal employment rose from 17.4 per cent in 1977 to 26 per cent in 1989” (2004).

At the same time social conditions were worsening, reggae icon Bob Marley passed away. His socially conscious music had rebelled against the suffering of those living in poverty due to the exploitation of higher class Jamaicans. His Rastafarian beliefs also rebelled against the European “ideal” by glorifying Africa (Cooper 2004). Marley had an enormous impact on Jamaican society by spreading Jamaican (ghetto) culture overseas while at the same time spreading an important social message. Some argue that the emergence of dancehall marked the end of the socially conscious lyrics. However, Cooper argues that in some ways it is just as revolutionary, but in a new way. She highlights Marley and dancehall deejay Shabba Ranks. Marley, seen as the epitome of musical culture, actually shows a more oppressive attitude toward women in his music than Ranks, a vulgar lyricist (2004).

From this chaos of the 1980s emerged a cultural rebellion called dancehall. It rebelled against upper class oppression and stood against European ideals. According to those subscribing to the European ideal, partiers wore tacky attire, including big jewelry and flashy clothes. Their behavior was unrefined, just like their patios speech (Cooper 2004). The loud, strong expressions of women were viewed as obnoxious and unfeminine (Hope 2006). The sexually explicit attire, gestures, and dancing were lewd and disgusting. Dancehall music was immoral, slack, and violent, and certainly a disgrace to the reggae artists of the past (Ama 1994).

Yet despite these criticisms by the moral majority in Jamaica, dancehall adherents took pride in their behavior. Academics, such as Cooper, interpret this as a refusal to

subscribe to values set by the former slave masters and current imperialists; instead dancehall emphasizes the Jamaican majority's African roots (1994). Traditional Afro-Jamaican folk dances, which are directly inherited from the dancing that slaves did before their forced journey to America, tend to be sexual. Their pelvic gyrations celebrate female fertility, just as dancehall does. Larger jewelry is believed to have an African influence, as well as the dancehall costume it accents (Walker 1994).

Besides being a rebellion against society, dancehall was also, in seeming contradiction, a reflection of it. Dancehall models dressed in rebellion against the European standards yet bleach their skin because lighter complexions usually signify a person of higher social class. Dancehall is a nontraditional way out of the ghetto, but uses extreme capitalism, a Western system (Hope 2004). While dancehall is a rebellion against oppression, it is also a reflection of it.

Dancehall does not only reflect controversial aspects of society, but also shows accepted facts of Jamaican society. It is important to note, however, that there is a difference between a reflector and a perfect mirror. For example, gun lyrics reflect the violent reality of the ghetto. During war time, disputes are "solved" with violence, and social power is earned and maintained through the assertion of physical power. For example, a don, the most powerful leader of a ghetto community, may protect the people in his territory with violence (Gray 2004). However, at the same time as gun violence is glorified in music, most dancehall participants recognize this glorification as fictional and actually detest real violence in their communities (Hope 2006). Some authors argue that gun lyrics increase violent behavior in the community, but despite much reading I have not found any hard evidence of this.

Gender hierarchies are also accurately reflected in dancehall. Some lyrics are indisputably derogatory to women, but in social relationships women are often treated in a derogatory manner. For example, it is for some considered a fact of life that men will have multiple partners. However, if a woman has multiple partners she is labeled a whore and will likely be left by her partners. Dancehall also reflects the position of homosexuals in the gender hierarchy. Lesbians are not mentioned in lyrics, and similarly in society they are often ignored, even in discussions regarding homosexuality. Gay males, however, appear in dancehall music as the victim of a violent crime. The most popular example of homophobia is found in Buju Banton's "Boom-Bye-Bye," which was cited in every book and article I read about homophobia in dancehall (Cooper 2004; Hope 2006; Williams 2000). A popular song now is "Step Pon Chi Chi Man" by Elephant man, whose dance features a strong stepping motion ([www.kidkameleon.com/2005/06/turbulent-times.html](http://www.kidkameleon.com/2005/06/turbulent-times.html)). In Jamaican society, homosexuality is illegal and considered immoral. Any challenge to this value is met with anything from severe contestation to deadly violence. For example, when the Jamaican Forum for Lesbians All-sexuals and Gays was formed, the leaders received harsh criticism and even death threats. When commissioner of corrections Colonel John Prescod announced that condoms would be distributed in prisons as a safeguard against HIV and AIDS, prison riots turned deadly. Inmates could not stand the acknowledgement that homosexual acts occurred in prisons. Heterosexuals in the prisons made a concerted effort to kill suspected homosexuals. Within three days, sixteen inmates were murdered. The government and warder's trade union, the University and Allied Workers Union, did not express any discontent with the homophobic motives of



the riots. Instead, leaders criticized Prescod as incompetent and made a point of emphasizing that they are not in favor of homosexuality (Williams 2000).

Though it is now spread throughout Jamaica and the diaspora, dancehall emerged from and still centers around the ghettos of Kingston and St. Andrew (Hope 2006). It is important to understand the stigmas attached to the ghetto in order to understand why much of the stigma against dancehall exists. Most discourse on Jamaican ghettos focuses only on poverty, violence, and misery. In fact, the only literature I found that doesn't follow this trend was in literature favoring dancehall, such as works by Cooper and Lindsay. Ghettos are seen only as a problem that needs to be fixed or eradicated. The people living there, according to stereotypes, are just shooting each other and provide a threat to anyone who penetrates their borders. Moreover, they lack class. They tend to have dark complexions, which generally signify lower socioeconomic class. The patios they speak is not as proper as the civilized English spoken by the upper class. Overall, "downtown" is considered racially, morally, and culturally inferior to "uptown" areas (Gray 2004). Note that this description is obviously similar to the above description of dancehall from a Euro-centric perspective. If dancehall had emerged in another section of society, would the stigma be the same?

Furthermore, the conditions of the ghetto are directly related to the character of dancehall culture. The fact that poverty exists motivates people to seek a "better" life. Since using the conventional route of education followed by "hard work" (i.e. obtaining a well paid job with opportunities for advancement) is impossible for most, obtaining fame and fortune through the dancehall becomes an attractive alternative. Ghetto youth can

achieve their dreams by a different route than the one the upper class dictates by working hard at an aspect of culture that the ghetto has come to dominate (Cooper 1994).

It is with this understanding of dancehall that one can begin to explore the liberation or oppression of women. Some, like Carolyn Cooper and Keisha Lindsay, argue that gender inequalities are reversed or nonexistent in the dancehall. According to Lindsay, women are liberated in the dancehall space, and are free to express their sexuality and pride for their bodies. Men take a backseat at the event, and respect women's control over much of the dancing space (2004). Lady Saw exemplifies this attitude, and in an interview with Sistren expressed her pride with her lewd lyrics and controversial body language (Dancehall 1994).

Others, like Donna P. Hope and Jarrett Brown, feel that the gender roles of the community are reflected in the dancehall. According to Hope, sexual liberation exists, but it is to the benefit of men who are able to enjoy the scantily clad women dancing provocatively. She argues that this behavior feeds on the perception of women as sexual objects, and is intended for the "masculine gaze." Evidence of this can be found in contests in which women compete for the nicest breasts or "biggest buff" (labia) and are judged only by men (2006). She notes that gender roles have changed since 1980, and men now model and dance as much as the women. In her study of the British Link-up Crew, she notes their style of dress, which would have been considered feminine a few years before. Men like these now dominate the dancehall space as much as women (2004). Brown notes, however, that this oppression is "'passive' because it is my belief that this domination is not fully understood by those who engender it and as such they are as much victims of the system they are representing as much as the groups who are

exploited by their actions or words” (1994, p.4). He believes that language plays a large role in this passive oppression. For example, “the way some male artistes in the dancehall community in Jamaica describe the female body, sex, and other categories of men and the way some female artistes respond to this description or even describe themselves, can be seen as a direct result of the patriarchal views that pervade the society” (1994, p.2).

My study will be interpreted through feminist theory. As such, I acknowledge my presence as an impact on my research space. Similarly, my observations and interpretations are influenced by my experiences, and thus affect the research. My analysis will be gendered. Men and women have different experiences in patriarchal societies, but history often ignores those of women. For my study I adopted the model of patriarchy that Errol Miller puts forth. Patriarchy is not only the systematic oppression of women by men. It also involves the oppression of groups of men with less power by men in the group of highest power. This may necessitate the enforcement of a hierarchy that puts men of less powerful groups below their female counterparts because men are seen as a greater threat to the power of the dominant group. Thus, it is important to analyze not only the relationship between men and women, but among different groups of men and women (2004).

### **Methodology**

In order to assess the situation of women in the dancehall I used a qualitative approach. It was my belief that a simple survey or other quantitative measure alone would not provide a valid measure of liberation or oppression since these concepts are

too complex to reduce to numbers. This study involved participatory research and in-depth interviews in the ghettos of Kingston, Jamaica.

In the participatory research component of my study I learned as much as possible about the current trends and participated in the customs I related to. It was important to me that I didn't draw conclusions about dancehall as a complete outsider. Clearly I would not be an insider, but I wanted to sincerely appreciate the culture as much as possible. In order to do this, I exposed myself to various aspects of dancehall culture and discovered parts that I genuinely wanted to participate in. I already loved to dance, so attempting to learn the popular dances was a natural first step. I became familiar with popular artists from the past and present. Music is a key component of dancehall and I therefore listened to it during my spare time. I had already loved some dancehall tunes, but now I made it a priority to discover more that I enjoyed listening to, even independent of my research. The purpose of emerging myself in the dancehall was to experience the reasons people are attracted to it rather than simply ask or make assumptions.

I visited several dances and recorded my observations. I had been introduced to a video man from Jonestown, Marc "Mousey" Napier, and he introduced me to another video man, Wayne "Juggla" McFarlane. Every time I attended a party it was with one of them. Doing so allowed me to be more easily accepted in the community because video men tend to be popular. It also gave me a great resource to ask about the things that I saw and heard. Both men were eager to explain everything and teach me important aspects of dancehall culture. I never carried a notebook and pen to avoid suspicion. Taking notes at a party would additionally promote a "me versus 'them'" impression. It would discourage a natural interaction and likely cause people to act differently around

me. Instead, I wrote from memory the morning after the party. Though my records would not be as thorough and accurate due to the limitations of human memory, I preferred this consequence over the alternative.

I looked for specific factors to indicate oppression and liberation. First, who was dominating the dancehall space? I measured domination by recording who was in the center of the space, who was watching, and who was participating most in the dancing. I also looked for interactions, such as if one gender is more successful in getting the other to move out of their way to create more space. Second, does one gender exercise control through intimidation? To measure this I looked for commands, such as “let me through,” signifying an attempt to exercise control over others. Also, I looked at sexual comments as a way to assert control in the space. Who approached whom with sexual/romantic intentions? Did the interaction appear to be mutual, or did one gender consistently act passive and the other assertive? Was there harassment in the dancehall, sexual or other, in which the victim expressed discontent but the behavior continued? Another factor I looked at is whether gender relations were absolute, or if hierarchies within each gender affected interactions in the dancehall. For instance, certain females might appear to be above some males in the hierarchy, but below others. I noticed how they related to other women. What factors determined this hierarchy? Were dancehall queens treated and viewed differently than other Jamaican women or foreigners? Additionally, I paid close attention to how I felt in the dancehall, though I understood that my feelings were influenced by another culture and could be biased.

During week three of my research I started conducting in depth interviews. My goal in the interviews was to assess a variety of persons’ views on dancehall, confirm or

reject my own interpretations, and evaluate the extent to which gender relations in the dancehall match those in the communities. I used the snowball method to find persons to interview. Mousey and Juggla introduced me to important people who agreed to speak with me. They also set up interviews with their family and friends.

I conducted 15 interviews: seven with females and eight with males. I purposely interviewed half of each gender because women's liberation or oppression has a direct relationship to the actions and ideas of men. I needed to find out not only how women felt in the dancehall, but how men perceived them. I additionally varied my sample by including some subjects who were passionate about dancehall and attended frequently, some who used to attend but stopped, and some who rarely attend. I included regular citizens, a dancehall queen, three video men, three artists, and a police officer who patrols the area. Eleven of the interviews occurred in the community in which the person lived. Of the other four, two were with artists and occurred at a performance site, one occurred at the interviewee's workplace, and the last was at my home. My goal was to make the subjects as comfortable as possible so they would be more likely to act naturally and answer honestly.

The interviews included a variety of questions geared to assess the subject's attitudes from different angles. I asked about their name, background information, and career/hobbies first in order to break the ice and get them talking about a neutral topic first. I then found out how often they attend parties, and their general opinion of them. The answer to these questions allowed me to evaluate the accuracy of their statements to some degree. For instance, if someone who rarely attends parties states that they can encourage fights to break out, I might doubt the veracity of their statement when regular

partiers state the opposite. I then let the interview run its course, but was sure to address certain points. I always asked what advice they would give me if I was going to the dancehall for the first time. I then asked how that would change based on my gender, nationality, and sexual orientation. Later, I attacked the issue of gender roles from another angle when I asked them to describe how men and women act in the dancehall. This was followed by a question about the degree to which they agree with this behavior, and then checked for consistency when I asked how they would expect their sons and daughters to behave if/when they attended dances. This question additionally allowed me to assess the degree to which they hold a double standard for males and females, and find out more about their perception of gender roles in the community. Finally, I attacked the issues from an academic perspective when I stated common arguments supporting and attacking dancehall, and asked them to respond to them. The variety of questions allowed me to gain a better understanding of the subject's views of gender roles in and out of the dancehall, and served as a buffer against miscommunications. The interview guide can be found in the appendix.

## **Findings**

### **Part 1: Participatory Observation**

Typical Parties:

Two types of parties exist: early and late parties. An early party is one in which people start arriving at approximately midnight, and the peak is at about 3:00am. A late party becomes populated at about 4:00am, and peaks at 6:00am. At either party, there is a typical sequence of events that I will describe in four segments.



First, people start arriving at the party. At this point there is no dancing. Partiers stay near the people they came with, and therefore there are several small clusters of people. Some will start rocking to the slow background music that is being played. In the second segment, the party is more crowded and the people merge into one group. This group takes the shape of a large circle with an empty middle. A variety of music is played, but it consists mostly of reggae and R & B. A couple of people will start to dance modestly. During the third segment many people will dance in the center of the circle. The selector will play mostly dancehall and hip hop tunes, though the most popular songs are saved for later. At this point, males and females will mostly dance separately. Women will dance with their female friends while men dance with their crews. There are few if any couples dancing, and the moves are not showy or complicated.

In the final segment, which I will refer to as the peak, the most difficult dances are performed by the most skillful dancers. This is when dancehall queens and popular crews will take over the dancing space. Less capable dancers will give up the space to watch them perform. The crowd is most energetic at the peak, and they laugh, cheer, and shockingly scream as outrageous behavior is performed in the center of the circle. Now the most popular songs are played, and the dancing is most sexual. Females shed outer clothing and climb onto roofs, gigantic speakers, or strangers' balconies and wine to the delight of the crowd. Couples will begin to form, and their dancing will blatantly simulate sexual positions. The more outrageously sexual a couple is, the more the crowd will cheer them on. For example, at one party a large woman was pushed down and lying on the floor as multiple men took turns lying on top of her and moving in a "humping" motion until another man pushed him off. She seemed to be participating and not a

victim. After getting off the floor, she straddled a horizontal male as another male wined on her “doggy style” from behind. This scene kept the crowd’s attention for a while. I witnessed a similar scene when five women dragged a man along the floor and then wined on and over him simultaneously. Once again, he did not seem victimized.

There are certain dancehall customs that one can expect to see consistently when attending parties. First, there will be many, many big ups. The mic man will big up any well known or important people who arrive, his friends, and anyone else he decides to throughout the party. The most important for my study, however, are the big ups for the women; at every party the mic man will big up all types of women. Some of the most popular big ups include that of the independent woman, sexy and round woman, slimmer (slim woman), woman who has her own hair (no extensions or weave), and women who are sexually able (usually expressed more explicitly). This female praise will usually accompany a song geared toward the women, and result in female domination of the dancehall space.

To call the men to the dancehall space, the mic man will denounce male homosexuality. In dancehall terms, that’s battyman fi dead. The mic man will harshly command all battyboys to leave the party, and point to the nastiness of their lifestyle. He will then call for a bullet bullet, at which point the crowd will form their hands into a mock pistol and shout a string of bullets. The males will take over the dance space as the selector plays an anti-battymen tune, such as Elephant Man’s “Step Pon Chi Chi Man.” The dance for this song involves stomping one’s foot out, and then turning it, as if stepping on a large bug and then rubbing it onto the pavement.

Another sure occurrence is the hype caused by the mic man and video man. The video man holds a camera with a conspicuously bright light. Wherever that light shines becomes the center of the party. Thus, at the peak of the party the entire crowd will rush up and down the street following the video man to the next entertaining act. Some people will react to the camera by performing, but most bystanders to the dancing will pretend it is not there. However, those at the center of the party will find creative ways to compete for the attention of the camera. If the camera is taping a female wining, another female will run within view of the video man and fall into a split while wining. Another female may then wrap her legs around an unsuspecting male and dutty wine (wine while swinging her head) on him. Once, a woman in her twenties grabbed a child of about ten years and crawled on all fours in front of him while he roughly wined on her, just to get on camera. This will continue to escalate until there is scene similar to the orgy-like occurrences I described above.

The mic man will try to influence the party environment by shouting into the microphone throughout the night, often taking precedence over the music. He will say things to create hype in the crowd, such as the big ups and social commentary mentioned above. However he will also venture into the crowd to encourage radical behavior. At times he will direct the video man as to where to go and follow him in order to create more hype. I was at the receiving end of this effort at one party. The music stopped, and the people in front of me parted to reveal two cameras and a microphone. The mic man gave me a quick interview, before calling to the selector to turn on the music. "Dutty wine on the video man!" he screamed, referring to Juggla. While not always successful, this effort often creates variety and entertainment at the party.

I was targeted by the mic man because my light skin easily labels me a foreigner. Foreigners are usually welcomed into the dancehall with urgings from community members (or mic men) to participate. If a foreigner is targeted like I was it is always in the name of good natured fun, not ill intentioned humiliation. When my American friends, mostly white, accompanied me to the parties they got extra attention, but were never hurt or harassed. Many times men would try to dance with us and teach us the moves. Sometimes this was with sexual intentions, but other times it was just friendly inclusion. When I went with a male friend, a couple of women wined on him, especially to attract the video man. Because of the novelty of a white foreign male performing sexual Jamaican moves with a Jamaican woman, the crowd (and video and mic men) loved it. He got an enthusiastic big up.

Attire:

Costumes are a critical component of dancehall culture. Attire is showy and dressed up, and serious dancehall adherents always “bling out.” As one moves from the outskirts to the center of the dancehall space costumes become flashier.

Females will arrive in skirts, tight jeans, or batty riders (extremely short shorts). In the center, jeans get lower and skirts get higher. While some women will wear t-shirts, those in the spotlight will wear revealing, tiny tops. Some will wear only a dress that resembles a long shirt. Visible undergarments are acceptable and often part of the outfit. Women’s hair is nicely styled and processed, not usually left natural. Flashy jewelry and accessories accent the outfit. Nice slippers are the norm to save feet from discomfort, but on special occasions heels are worn. Sometimes the hair is colored, and it is usually obvious that the style was carefully done for the occasion. Finger and toe nails are

covered with long acrylics and professionally polished. The look is completed with some make-up.

Males put similar care into their appearance, though the style is slightly different. They wear tight jeans made of thin, purposely faded material and tight shirts. Their tops are never revealing, though. They wear nice t-shirts or button down shirts and sometimes cover them with a blazer. Males also style and process their hair, and wear flashy jewelry. Belts usually have large, shiny buckles with bling or digital lights that flash their name. Men wear nice name brand sneakers or shoes.

#### Dances:

Currently most dances are unisex. Examples include the willy bounce, wacky dip, badman forward badman pullup, and stookie. Descriptions of these currently popular dances can be found in the appendix. Wining without a partner is an exclusively female form of dancing. Current examples include the tick tock and the extremely popular dutty wine. There are no dances in which women are forbidden from participating, but there are two in which men tend to take control of the party: the AK-47 and anti-(male) homosexual dances.

#### Gender Interactions at Parties:

In this section I will answer the questions that I asked in my methodology. First, neither men nor women dominated the floor overall; they just dominated at different times. A group of males would clear an area in the dance space and show off a little, and then a female group might do the same. As stated before, the mic man can influence who dominates the floor with big ups and other hype. The selector can choose music that attracts either men or women. Right now the song “Dutty Wine” causes the largest

gender disparity of any other. During that song females will take over the party and compete for the spotlight by performing the dutty wine at the most dangerous locations. This segment is occasionally rivaled when Shabba Ranks shouts “shot a fire fire pon...” and then plays gunshots in the riddim (rhythm). Males in the dancehall simulate gun fights so violently that the first time I saw it I thought a fight was breaking out. They will pick up long objects to symbolize a large AK-47, and then “chase” the opposing group with their “guns,” mock firing as the gunshots are played in the song. The group being shot will retreat in sync with the rhythm or dance as if their body was being pushed by the force of gunshots.

Males and females both approached persons of the opposite sex to dance. Especially at the peak of the party, dancers will pick a partner and just start dancing with them and see how they react. I noticed some women will reject a male approach, but I rarely saw a male reject a woman. Because rejections were rare, this may be a coincidence. Also, it may not be a sexual approach but an approach from one friend to another. I could not tell the difference from my observations, though my hunch based on body language is that oftentimes couples on the dance floor do not know each other well.

One aspect of dancehall gender relations that often goes unmentioned is the position of lesbians. The position of gay males at the bottom of the gender hierarchy is clear, but that of lesbians is not as obvious from participant observation. For this information I was forced to rely on interviews alone. I did not notice any behavior in the dancehall that could be interpreted as gay or lesbian. I would consider behavior possibly gay or lesbian if it involved significantly more physical contact between people of the

same gender than I normally observed, or if people were verbally recognized as gay or lesbian.

## **Part 2: In-depth Interviews**

During the week when I conducted interviews I also was able to spend a lot of time in the community become more familiar with it. Most subjects described their community as “nice” and “fun.” Several pointed to the fact that during peace time there are parties to go to every night. Even Dahlia, the Portmore dancehall queen, who has never lived in the ghetto, said that she loves the ghetto because of the fun party environment and the talent that comes from there. She knows great people there, and feels safer than when she is at home. At home, she must lock her door and her grills at all times, whereas her friends in Jonestown sleep with their doors open. Mousey and Juggla express pride in the culture that comes from their community. Bob Marley, Beenie Man, Shabba Ranks—most famous Jamaican artists are from the Kingston ghettos. Mousey has a house uptown, but he is rarely there. He chooses to keep an apartment in Jonestown because that is where he works and has fun.

My interviewees did not, however, ignore the challenges in their community. While nobody spoke of poverty or unemployment (other than to tell me they are currently unemployed), three quarters of the subjects mentioned the reality of gun violence. A few mentioned it when I asked them to describe their community, while the rest mentioned it when I asked about gun lyrics. Michelle, Juggla’s fiancé and baby mother, and her friend Alvin laughed when I asked them to tell me about their community, and asked out loud whether they should tell me the truth. They said that sometimes it is very good, and sometimes it is very bad. When there is a war, I would not be able to come into the



community. Besides the danger that would come from being a suspicious outsider, and stray bullets, the police would prevent me from entering. I encountered this same attitude from the taxi drivers who took me to the area. First, they would think I was confused about where I wanted to go. "Admiraltown police station? You must mean a different one." Then they would think I didn't know what that area was. "That's not a good area. I don't even go to that area." A couple of times when I called Taxi Apollo they told me nobody was available to go to that area. This only happened to me when I was going to or being picked up from Jonestown. When I did make it clear that I knew where I was going, they then wondered why I was going there, and often waited until Juggla met up with me, after telling me many times to be careful. Except for Juggla's friends, this happened with every new taxi driver I used.

Mark Jennings, however, explained that innocents are not targets, but are usually the victims of gang wars. If a gun fight is about to ensue, those involved will shelter themselves behind a wall or other protective barrier, and therefore be safer than a civilian walking down the middle of the street. I had a few experiences that showed the community's concern for the safety of its people and visitors. The first time, I arrived at a bar in Admiraltown where I was supposed to meet Paul, Juggla's childhood friend, for an interview. He wasn't there yet, so I asked the owner and bartender, whom I had met the day before, if they had seen him. They hadn't, so I said I would wait and he should be there soon. Five minutes later, Juggla showed up. He said that he had been sleeping, but the owner of the bar called him and said "There's a white girl here and I think she belongs to you." At first I thought this was due to suspicion, but later realized it was probably meant to protect me. Another time I was waiting in the same location for

Juggla, and a group of men called me over. They told me to stand near them rather than alone because there were a few men around that they were suspicious of. A final time, I was at an early party with Juggla, Mousey, and my friend Steve from California. A woman was dancing upside down with Steve and must have dropped her cell phone. When we couldn't find it, it became evident that someone had picked it up and kept it. Ultimately, the party came to an end because the community, especially the don and people running the party, were extremely upset by the incident.

When describing typical dancehall attire, most subjects focused on the people at the center. However, when I asked advice on what to wear, I was told to dress sexy or dress up, but that it wasn't necessary to expose a lot of skin. I should feel comfortable with what I wore, and express my own style. If male, I should wear jeans and also dress how I feel comfortable.

When I asked how they felt about the female dress in the dancehall, three quarters of my interviewees did not have a problem with it. Common reasons were that it is just the style, or that they did not feel comfortable in that attire but if others did that was fine. Three people expressed discontent with the way females dress in the dancehall. Two more were hesitant to say they would want their daughters to dress like that in the dancehall. There was a clear distinction made, though, between wearing revealing outfits in the dancehall and wearing them during the day in the community.

Majority of subjects ironically described male attire as feminine or "doing everything that girls do." A couple of subjects said that the attire looked homosexual, and said that if that was done a few years ago they would have been perceived as battyman. Beauty care that men now do that used to be only for women includes

bleaching their skin, wearing tight jeans, processing their hair, and getting manicures. Recently, salons have opened that cater to men only.

The attire of men is not the only thing that has changed in the dancehall. Men also participate more in the dancing now than they did before Bogle became popular. They are in the spotlight as much as women. Also, there are more unisex dances than before, but according to one subject men and women don't dance in couples as much. Two men who stopped going to the dancehall pointed to the increase in violent lyrics.

While violent lyrics are a turnoff for some, others did not have a problem with them. This topic gave me the most controversial responses. First, it is important to recognize that artists are singing about things that are a reality in the ghetto; guns and violence do affect the lives of people living there. However some, like Mark Jennings and Paul Morgan feel that violent lyrics are a negative influence, and have caused an increase in violence in the community. Others, like Mousey and Juggla, explained that for some deejays, it is just hype in the dancehall. Partiers recognize that in reality guns are not glorious, and will not be encouraged to pick one up because of Elephant Man's lyrics. A third point of view combines these two extreme viewpoints best. Violent lyrics do cause an increase in violence in the community, but that is only because some parents neglect to raise their children to reject violence. If parents are too busy or absent, children do not have enough guidance and may subscribe to the values put forth by deejays. Therefore, it is not lyrics that one should blame, but those raising children in the community. Even those in favor or strongly against gun lyrics cited parents/guardians as a stronger influence on children than the dancehall. Thus, in general the three views are:

- 1) violent lyrics are a negative force on the community because they impact children who

do not have proper guidance at home; 2) Violent lyrics increase community crime, but the problem should be solved with better parenting and artists should still express themselves freely; and 3) violent lyrics do not have a negative impact on the community, but a lack of effective parenting does.

This point of view is paired with the belief that dancehall is adult entertainment and not appropriate for children. Nobody I interviewed would encourage their children to attend the dancehall until about 16, and about half expressed a later age for girls. The reason for this was always that girls can get pregnant, and the burden would be on the girl and her family. If a boy gets a girl pregnant, the baby would not come home. All subjects would encourage their children to experience the dancehall and decide for themselves if they would like to attend regularly. As young adults, they should make their own decisions, and they will have the moral capacity to know the difference between dancehall hype and reality.

This difference between hype and reality was very evident in our discussions about homosexuality. In the dancehall hype, gay males are symbolically stepped on and killed. However, only Michelle and Alvin, who were interviewed together, think that real physical violence would ensue if a gay man went to a party and was known to be gay. He would likely face harassment, though, if he made his sexual orientation obvious. For instance, he could not speak of being homosexual or do feminine things like the dutty wine. When I asked for advice on attending the dancehall if I were a gay male, the response was often some exclamation, followed by “bullet bullet!” On a more serious note, they said that if I were gay, that’s fine, but stay away from them. Males refused to go to a party with a “battyman” because they would in turn be perceived as homosexual.

The advice was to stay away from the party, or act heterosexual. Despite the hype, according to my subjects, men who are known or rumored to be homosexual are typically not harassed unless they are caught displaying homosexual behavior.

When I asked for advice as a lesbian the reactions were never so severe. I do not have to dance with men, but I should expect them to approach me. If I tell them I am a lesbian, they will probably want to, in the words of Juggla, “fuck the lesbian out of her.” However, I should not display any homosexual behavior, such as dancing or flirting with another female. That behavior might be okay uptown, but is unacceptable in their community. If a lesbian keeps her homosexuality private, however, she will be accepted by the community. According to Juggla, his only problem with his lesbian friend is that “she gets more phone numbers than I do!”

When I asked people to describe their relationships with the people closest to them, most said “good” or “okay” and I did not press further because it is a personal question. Two people, however, described their relationships with persons of the opposite gender in more detail. Alvin said that he treats women with respect, but sometimes they get on his nerves. If it is his sisters, he will “lick” (hit) them, but he would never lick his friends. I asked he thought it would be okay if his sisters licked him, and he said it depended what he did to make them want to hit him. Shanique, one of Mousey’s friends, described her relationship with her boyfriend. He watches and tries to control everything she does, and therefore she feels oppressed in the dancehall. If he is unfaithful or beats her she feels she has to accept it because she is financially dependent on him. She could not be unfaithful because he would leave her immediately.

Shanique feels that her situation is typical of many women in her community, and others expressed similar thoughts. When I asked if gender relations in the community were equal or if one gender has more power, the answer was that men have more power. Though the men claimed they believe in treating women equally, they knew that other men beat and otherwise disrespected women. Most subjects felt that in the dancehall the playing field is more level. Women can go to have fun and are generally respected and treated equally. However, when I asked why I haven't seen a video woman or mic woman, Mousey, Juggla, and Venicia (Mousey's female friend) said that women were not as competent as men in these roles, and women should just go to the dancehall to dance and have fun. All others responded by saying that had heard of one or two women in those roles, and thought women just didn't want them as much as men did. The three artists I interviewed, two males and one female, each separately mentioned the difficulties that women face in their industry. Female artists are usually judged not just for their talent, but for their willingness to give sexual favors. Producers will bribe women by refusing to release their songs if they don't sleep with them. Furthermore, my subjects couldn't name any female producers that could be used as alternatives.

In my final question, I asked for a direct response to the topic of my paper. Most said that dancehall is liberating for women because they can dance and have fun. When I presented the argument that the sexual nature of it is liberating because normally it is only acceptable for men to publicly express their sexuality, three people agreed while most said it depends on the behavior and attitude of the woman. Shanique was the only woman who felt oppressed in the dancehall, and that was due to her boyfriend.

Several of the topics presented above may seem irrelevant to the liberation or oppression of women, but I included each sentence for a particular reason. By the end of the analysis and discussion sections the links between the topics will be evident.

**Analysis:**

My observations and interviews reveal a great pride in the community. When I spent time in the area the citizens made it a point to be welcoming. They wanted to include me in the party to make sure I enjoyed myself. Teaching me to dance allowed them to share a part of their culture that they are proud of. It was clear that the opinion of “uptown” folks would not affect their pride in the dance because they showed a moral system independent of uptown judgment. Though homosexuality is allowed uptown, it is unacceptable in the ghetto.

Contrary to the perception of outsiders, citizens of the ghetto community are not all criminals who go around shooting each other. In actuality there is a great concern for the safety of community members and visitors, and for the image of the community. In Craigtown, behavior such as stealing a cell phone is unacceptable and affects more than the victim of the petty crime. The people of Jonestown made sure that as soon as I entered their borders I was safe and cared for.

Pride was further revealed when my interviewees provided positive descriptions of their community. Dancehall was one source of this pride because the communities were described as “fun,” and some even mentioned the parties. Would a proud community like this allow something to take place that they felt was immoral? Despite outside criticism, it was described as a good influence because it brings the community together. This shows that dancehall can affect a community. It can also affect the way



people feel about themselves and their community. However, the community would now allow it if they felt it had a negative influence.

Further evidence that dancehall is not perceived by the community as a negative influence is that every person interviewed would encourage their kids to experience it. Yet this would not be until early adulthood because there is recognition that if elements in the dancehall are not interpreted maturely there could be negative consequences. Dancehall culture is rebellious, and should not be taken out of context. Gun lyrics are symbolic of resistance, or a description of violence that actually occurs. They are not a call to actually shoot people, and my interviewees recognized this behavior as unacceptable even though many of them will shout “bullet bullet” at parties. Reactions of shock and laughter at sexual dancing suggest that public expressions of sexuality are considered taboo in the community, and most subjects said they would not want their small children to see that. Interviews confirmed that the sexual dress and behavior of women in the dancehall is not acceptable in other public places.

In contrast to community social norms, dancehall celebrates female sexuality. Wining, the sexual dance of the party, is reserved only for women or a man with a female partner. General big ups always go to females, and include references to their bodies and sexuality. The video man zooms in on female sexual organs, but would never do that to a male. Moreover, men who do not enjoy female sexuality, namely homosexual males, are denounced severely in dancehall.

Though sexual attention is given only to women, men are not marginal in the dancehall. In the dance space there is virtual equality. While women are central to sexual expressions, men are central to violent ones. Overall, there is equal access to the

dance space and camera. Men and women will both approach the opposite gender to dance; both will initiate, and nobody seems harassed or victimized. I purposely cited two examples of a person being controlled by others to show that both men and women are sometimes targeted for extreme sexual dancing. Though the person does not have much control of the situation, in neither case did they seem upset by the situation, as evidenced by their laughter. Furthermore, both men and women were expected to put both time and chemicals into their appearance, breaking the stereotype that those are female practices. The existence of so many unisex dances also shows equality. My interview subjects also gave similar advice for men and women attending the dancehall, and did not believe much would change if they were the opposite gender.

Most controversially, women are given equal rights to express their sexuality. Men always have this freedom; in fact, in Jamaica it is masculine to do so. I notice it every time I walk down the street. Men are encouraged to have multiple partners and be the dominant one in each relationship. In the dancehall, women are encouraged to express their sexual nature. They are able to approach men and be dominant in the symbolic sexual acts.

Nevertheless, this equality is not reflected in other areas of community life. My conversations in the community confirm that Shanique's oppression in her relationship with her boyfriend is not an exception. Alvin, expresses a more equal outlook in his willingness not only to lick his sisters, but be licked if he deserved it. However, in conversations off the record I learned that people who express views that seem as if the (mis)treatment is allowed on both ends don't always experience the reciprocation. Further inequality is shown in the view that females cannot videotape as well as males,

and that girls must wait longer to attend the dancehall than boys. If that is not enough evidence, interviewees blatantly told me that men have more power in their community.

Though inequality exists, it seems as though gender equality is seen as the moral ideal. The men I interviewed pointed to other men who disrespected women; they never admitted to it themselves. The disparity between the raising of boys and girls only exists because parents can point to a biological difference as justification for the inequality.

There is a clear exception to the ideal of equality: homosexuals. Homosexual males are more outcast than homosexual females because they are more of a threat to the dominant group. In the ghetto, part of the definition of a man is the appreciation of female sexuality. Gay men violate this definition by being sexually attracted to men. Furthermore, I included Juggla's harsh quote about lesbians to show their oppression in society and more so in the dancehall. Dancehall is a celebration of sexuality as defined by the dominant group: heterosexuals. Lesbians are not allowed the freedom of expressing their sexuality like heterosexual women are. Furthermore, Juggla's statement shows a denial of the agency of the homosexual woman, asserting that her lifestyle can be changed by men.

Despite popular belief, however, violence against homosexuals is not promoted, and they are generally left alone if they respect the boundaries set by their oppressors. The fact that the perceived violence of the ghetto and the violence advocated by deejays is not generally accepted in the community is important to my study because of its similarities with slackness. Both expressions are criticized by opponents of dancehall and carry a stigma. However, it is difficult to assess the sexual behavior of people in a community. Therefore, I am using violence as a parallel; if gun lyrics can be left in the

party, the same is likely true for other aspects of dancehall. Several artists have lyrics that express the sexual exploitation of women. Perhaps this is also viewed as dancehall hype and unacceptable in the community. Unfortunately, this also means that the sexual freedom of expression for women might also stay in the dance hall.

Though no single gender dominates the dance space, patriarchy is clearly evident in the music industries and party dynamics. Male producers objectify women with their sexual bribes, and the artists I interviewed could not think of a female alternative. This means that these men are in control of whose songs get produced, and because of this blatantly sexual oppression they usually have lyrics written by a man. Because of sexism in the entertainment industry, women are usually restricted to the visual aspects of dancehall.

The patriarchal structure is further evident in the roles of the video man and mic man. Many people will do almost anything to get on camera. The dancehall videos are shipped abroad, and can give a person great exposure. Everyone I talk to knows the story of a girl who got a modeling contract when an agent saw her on a dancehall video. Yet because the person behind the camera is male, the people who want exposure are forced to please male eyes in order to get attention. Moreover, women in the dancehall are not usually getting big ups from other women; the mic man determines who gets recognized at the parties.

**Discussion:**

As stated above, my hypothesis is that women are liberated in the dancehall because they are allowed more freedom of expression, but ultimately are still in a patriarchal space and therefore oppressed by men. This hypothesis was partially

confirmed. As Lindsay asserts, Heterosexual women are liberated because they can express their sexuality publicly and are respected for it. Though men may enjoy the view, women are not dressing and acting sexually for their own pleasure. They are treated as equals on the dance floor, and in order to achieve this men actually had to act more like women. My hypothesis is further confirmed because dancehall is still ruled by a highly patriarchal structure. Males dominate the dancehall industry and party space, as Hope suggests. Furthermore, though women do not attend parties with the intention of pleasing men, men are able to exploit their behavior. Women must please the video man and mic man if they want exposure.

However, in my hypothesis I missed the fact that only heterosexual women are liberated; non-heterosexual women are not able to express their sexuality freely. Surprisingly, the literature I read had not considered lesbians in their discussion of homosexuality in the dancehall. Using Miller's theory, I suggest that the hierarchical structure, from dominant to marginalized, is as follows: heterosexual males, heterosexual women, homosexual women, homosexual males. Additionally, some people who attend the functions look down on women who act or dress very sexually. This means that even in the dancehall space they are punished by some for their sexual expressions.

**Conclusion:**

The title of my paper summarizes my research goals and mentality. The title was decided on with input from members of the community, and is written in the language of the dancehall. The dutty wine is the most hyped, most sexual, exclusively female dance in the current dancehall scene. It is also a dance I participated in more than once with members of the community. "Ooman" is the patios word for "woman," which was the

focus of my study. “Big Up or Dis” signifies the debate concerning the liberation (big up) or oppression (dis/respect) of women in the dancehall. The results of my research show both big up and dis. Heterosexual women are given the freedom of sexual expression that they are denied in other spaces in society. However, in this patriarchal space homosexuals are denied this freedom, and all are oppressed by heterosexual males.

One thing that my study did not satisfactorily determine is how much dancehall liberates women when they are not in the dancehall space. I did not receive enough consistent evidence to show whether women who regularly attend dancehall tend to be less oppressed in other aspects of their lives. I also got some ambiguous evidence regarding (in)equality. There is inequality for women in the community, but evidence that equality is considered morally right. Is this showing a progression toward equality? I have showed that gender roles have become more equal in the dancehall, but given my parallel to gun lyrics this might not mean much. However, gun violence is viewed as immoral and therefore not allowed to pervade the community. Perhaps something that is seen as moral, such as greater equality, would be able to leak out of the dancehall. It does, after all, help to unify the community. This question is suggested as a topic of future study.

I further suggest that dancehall be studied as a tool for development. This was not the focus of my paper, but my interviews pointed to the pride and unity it can bring to a community. Cooper addressed this possibility in an article in *Sistren* (1994), but I would like to see the idea developed further.

Two major limitations of my study were time and space. I originally planned to travel to one rural and one tourist community, and compare them to the dancehall space

in Kingston. However, as I began exploring my topic I realized that to do this would sacrifice the depth to which I could study dancehall in Kingston because of my very limited time. My study occurred mostly in Jonestown and surrounding communities. I suggest that further researchers with less time constraints address this very important issue, as dancehall has now spread throughout Jamaica and internationally.

## Appendix

Interview Guide:

Name

Age

Where do you live?

How would you describe your community?

Did you grow up there?

Do you go to dances?

If yes:

How long have you been going?

How often do you go?

Why did you start going?

What do you do there?

How did you learn to do that?

Why do you have this role?

What's your favorite dance or song?

If no:

Why don't you go?

Do you like dancehall music?

What's your favorite song?

What do you do for fun?

Pretend I know nothing about dancehall, and I tell you I want to go with you to check it out.



What should I expect to see?

How should I dress and act?

How should I expect to be treated?

Would this advice change if I was:

Male? (how?)

Jamaican male? (how?)

Lesbian? (how?)

Gay male? (how?)

Who do you live with?

Could you tell me about the people you are closest with who impact your life the most?

Describe your relationship with them (especially ask about relations with people of opposite gender)

How are children being raised? (look for gender differences)

Do/Would you encourage your children to go to the dancehall? Why or why not?

Critics point to slackness and gun lyrics as bad influences that come from dancehall.

How do you feel about this criticism? (whatever they say, present the opposite viewpoint and ask for a response)

What songs do you like?

Do you agree with the lyrics?

Do you feel that the slackness and violence stays in the dancehall or is it carried over into everyday life?

Did slackness increase as dancehall became more popular? Was it due to dancehall?

Do you think violence in the community would increase if there were more dancehall parties?

What is your job/income source?

What other activities take up your day?

I've noticed that males and females tend to have different roles in the dancehall. Do you agree?

Why does this happen?

What would be different if you were a man/woman?

Are these roles similar to how men and women should behave in your community?

Have you seen dancehall change since you first started going?

Overall, do you feel women are liberated or oppressed in the dancehall, or a combination of both?

Popular Dances:

Willy Bounce: shift weight from side to side, turning torso to face the side on which your weight is placed. Bend arms and as you switch sides raise the arm that is to your front so that your loose fist is approximately chin level. Keep other fist at waist level. Switch sides every two counts.

Wacky Dip: start with the willy bounce. When the music calls for a wacky dip, willy bounce to the one side on count one, the other side on count two, and then dip torso forward in a circular motion in the direction of the first side. Dip and return to your original position on counts three and four.

Badman forward badman pull up: bend forward and bend knees slightly. Alternate raising each knee toward your chest for one count. A slight hopping motion is

used to travel, but should be subtle and barely raise you from the ground. This can be mixed in with the killer walk, in which you bend back slightly and vary the rhythm by taking some faster steps. There is also a slight foot rotation.

**Stookie:** stand with feet wide and knees slightly bent. Take quick, tiny steps forward, stepping with your right foot on the down-beat and your left foot on the up-beat (counting the rhythm “one and two and...” the “and” is the up-beat). Rotate hips in a small motion as you walk. On beat four, do not step and dip by bending knees further.

**Tick Tock:** Instead of wining by revolving hips smoothly, revolve with abrupt motions, as if you are trying to hit four points on a clock.

**Dutty Wine:** quickly and revolve your head as wine. Do not be elegant; this dance is meant to look a little out of control. This move is varied by standing, sitting, or hanging in different positions.

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