

Sexual restrictions beyond anti-gay prejudice: Anal sex, oral sex, masculinity and sexual  
prejudice in Jamaica

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**Abstract**

This is the first quantitative research to investigate attitudes toward heterosexual anal and oral sex in Jamaica, compare them to anti-gay and anti-lesbian attitudes, and frame them within a broader understanding of sexual prejudice based on gender norms. Fifty Jamaican participants' attitudes toward heterosexual anal sex were as negative as attitudes toward gay male sex, and more negative than attitudes toward lesbian sex. Negative attitudes toward male sexual behaviours were predicted by male role norms, but attitudes toward lesbian sex were not, suggesting that Jamaican anti-gay prejudice may be part of a larger set of norms that police gender-appropriate behaviour.

Sexual prejudice refers to any negative beliefs, attitudes or behaviours toward others based on sexual orientation; though practically, it usually refers to heterosexuals' negativity toward sexual minorities (Herek, 2004). It is a global problem, and incidents of sexual prejudice occur around the world (Ottosson, 2009). In recent years, increasing international attention has been paid to the severe and sometimes violent anti-gay prejudice in Jamaica. In particular, the illegality of consensual anal sex between adults (Jamaica Ministry of Justice, 1969), and the high levels of prejudice against both gay men and lesbians (West & Cowell, 2015) have been heavily scrutinised. This prejudice has been the subject of an award-winning international film, *The Abominable Crime* (Fink, 2013), a televised programme on the British Broadcasting Corporation's (BBC) Channel 4 (Adepitan, 2014), a radio programme on the BBC's World Service (West & Geering, 2013), and a series of international protests aimed at blocking the performances of anti-gay Jamaican music (Clunis, 2004; Walters, 2013).

As well as political and media attention, there has also been an increase in empirical research. A number of studies have recently investigated the relative strength, acceptability, and widespread nature of anti-gay prejudice in Jamaica, as well as factors that predict higher levels of prejudice and methods of reducing this prejudice. These studies have supported anecdotal assertions that anti-gay prejudice in Jamaica is stronger (West & Hewstone, 2012a), more accepted (West & Hewstone, 2012b), and more widespread than anti-gay prejudice in many other countries, including those in the Caribbean (Boxill et al., 2011, 2012; West & Cowell, 2015). Among the factors that predict more anti-gay prejudice in Jamaica are higher levels of religiosity, lower levels of education and income, and a preference for dancehall music (West & Cowell, 2015). The prejudice

can be reduced through positive cross-group interactions between gay and heterosexual Jamaicans (West & Hewstone, 2012a), or through positive imagery involving interactions with gay Jamaicans (West, Husnu, & Lipps, 2014). Finally, though prejudice is high overall, prejudice against gay men is higher than prejudice against lesbians, and heterosexual men report stronger anti-gay prejudice than do heterosexual women (West & Cowell, 2015).

In both the media and the scientific research, there has been a near-exclusive focus on *anti-gay* prejudice when discussing Jamaican sexual restrictiveness – the cultural tendency to limit, punish or socially restrict certain sexual behaviours. This occurs despite the fact that there are many intersecting and overlapping forms of sexual restrictiveness in Jamaica, some of which target *heterosexual* practices (Chin, 1997; Farquharson, 2005; LaFont, 2001; Sharpe & Pinto, 2006). The focus on anti-gay prejudice, rather than the many other sexual idiosyncrasies particular to Jamaica, may be motivated by practicality and expediency; the narrative of a conservative church or government restricting the rights or freedoms of gay citizens is more easily understood and related to similar movements in other countries such as the US (Araiza, 2010), and the UK (Dick, 2008). However, there are reasons to believe that this is an unhelpfully narrow understanding of Jamaican sexual prejudice.

To be clear, it is not the aim of this manuscript to downplay the reality or severity of anti-gay prejudice in Jamaica. The seriousness of this prejudice is increasingly evident, not only from the empirical research, but also from documented incidents in which gays have been attacked, beaten or killed (J-FLAG, 2013), some of which are quite gruesome, such as the attack on a Jamaican university student in which several other students

pursued him, calling for his death (Pearson, 2012). Furthermore, though anti-gay attitudes are negatively correlated with both income and education (West & Cowell, 2015), negative attitudes are found in the public discourse at all levels of society (Cowell & Saunders, 2011), and strongly supported by several lobby groups (Skyers, 2014; West, 2012).

This prejudice is also strongly evident in the lyrics of some dancehall music – one of the most popular musical forms in Jamaica (Pinnock, 2007). Examples of lyrics include “Aal bati-man fi ded [All homosexuals must die]” (Chin, 1997, p 128) and “Chi-chi man fi ded an dats a fak [Gay men should die and that’s a fact]” (Farquharson, 2005, p. 109; see Farquharson, 2009 for a discussion of sexual prejudice in dancehall lyrics). Nonetheless, despite the high levels of anti-gay prejudice, it is possible that ignoring the levels of condemnation of certain *heterosexual* practices may obscure the larger picture of sexual prejudice in Jamaica and ultimately impede efforts at reducing this prejudice. To improve our understanding of this larger picture, this study is the first to investigate attitudes toward two heterosexual practices in this context – anal sex and cunnilingus.

### **Anal Sex and Oral Sex in Jamaica**

Though there is as yet no empirical research on the subject, literary analysis of Jamaican dancehall music reveals much of the same antipathy toward heterosexual oral sex and anal sex as toward homosexuality (for reviews see Farquharson, 2005; Hippolyte, 2004; Pinnock, 2007; Saunders, 2003). As well as encouraging violence against gays, many dancehall songs also encourage equally explicit violence against people who perform oral sex of any kind, who are referred to in Jamaican patois as “bow cats”

(Hippolyte, 2004, p. 90). Examples of lyrics condemning heterosexual oral sex include “kill pussy-sucker” and “bow cat, sodomite, batty man fi get assassination”, [“people who perform oral sex, lesbians and gay men should be assassinated”] (Outrage!, 2010). Similarly, LaFont (2001) observed that the condemnation of heterosexual anal sex appears to reach levels similar to that concerning homosexual anal sex. Accordingly, some dancehall songs condemn anal sex without clarifying whether it refers to heterosexual or homosexual anal sex: “tek a bazooka and shat batty-fucker” [take a bazooka and shoot anyone who has anal sex] (Outrage!, 2010). Furthermore, in at least one song, the condemnation is unambiguously directed at *heterosexual* anal sex: “dat mean say ah inna gyal batty yuh ah enta | . . . Yah nuh badman yah badman shell” [“ that means you are entering a girls bottom . . . you are not a real man, you are a shell of a man”] (“Done See It – Spragga Benz,” 2015).

### **Restrictive Sexuality in Defence of Masculinity**

This extreme condemnation of *heterosexual* practices cannot be explained by anti-gay attitudes. On the contrary, Hope (2006), suggests that dancehall lyrics are not primarily concerned with homosexuality, but rather with emasculation. Others echo this hypothesis, suggesting that the central goal of the sexual restrictiveness in Jamaican culture is to police the boundaries of gender identity and in particular, masculinity (Hippolyte, 2004; Pinnock, 2007; Saunders, 2003; West, 2010). That is, the sexual mores clarify the injunctive norms indicating how men are supposed to behave in order to preserve their masculinity, which is both valuable and precarious. This is also similar to research findings in other societies, indicating that anti-gay sentiment stems from narrow perceptions of male gender norms (Davies, 2004; Falomir-Pichastor & Mugny, 2009;

Parrott, 2009) or are part of the performance of masculinity (Bosson, Weaver, Caswell, & Burnaford, 2012; Kimmel, 2004). Finally it is also in line with research done in Jamaica that found that male gender was the strongest and most reliable predictor of anti-gay sentiment, surpassing age, income, education, and religion (West & Cowell, 2015).

If these hypotheses are correct, anti-gay prejudice in Jamaica may be one facet of a larger set of sexually restrictive attitudes that, at their core, serve the purpose of rigidly defining acceptable gender-based behaviour. Hence, understanding these overlooked aspects of Jamaican sexual culture – the aversions to anal sex and oral sex – may be crucial to understanding and reducing anti-gay prejudice in Jamaica. This study empirically investigated these hypotheses, comparing negativity toward gay male sex, lesbian sex, heterosexual anal sex, and heterosexual cunnilingus, as well as investigating whether male role norms predicted these attitudes.

### **Current Research**

This current research investigated anti-gay prejudice in Jamaica, positing that anti-homosexual attitudes are one facet of a broader set of sexually restrictive attitudes that police the borders of masculinity. That is, the overarching goal is an avoidance of emasculation, not simply an avoidance of homosexuality. This led to a number of specific hypotheses: first, if the primary goal of Jamaican sexual restrictiveness is the avoidance of emasculation, not homosexuality, attitudes toward gay men should be significantly more negative than attitudes toward lesbians, a difference that has been found in prior research (West & Cowell, 2015); second if the primary concern is emasculation, negativity toward some condemned *male heterosexual* behaviours should be as high as negativity toward gay sex between men; third, similarly, if the focus is emasculation,

some *heterosexual* behaviours carried out by men should be viewed more negatively than homosexual sex between women; fourth, if the restrictiveness stems from a concern about emasculation, male role norms should predict negative attitudes toward sexual behaviours carried out by men (e.g., heterosexual anal sex and cunnilingus), but should not predict attitudes toward lesbian sex.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

Using posted signs, notifications on Jamaican internet forums, and word of mouth, fifty heterosexual Jamaicans – 24 males, 23 females, and 3 who did not state their gender, aged between 14 and 35 (*mean age* = 21.55, *SD* = 3.79) – were recruited to complete a questionnaire in 2014 in exchange for a chance to win cash in a prize-draw.

### **Procedure**

Advertising material only informed participants that they were “invited to take part in a psychological survey about contemporary social attitudes”. Following this were instructions indicating how to get in touch with the researcher to take part in the study. Participants did not know beforehand that the questionnaire concerned any aspect of sexual orientation or that it assessed participants’ attitudes toward gay men, men who engaged in heterosexual anal sex, men who performed heterosexual cunnilingus, and lesbians, as well as participants’ adherence to male role norms of anti-femininity. Participants completed the survey online with minimal interference from the investigator, and were instructed to complete the survey in private with minimal distractions. Anonymity was assured throughout, and participants were fully debriefed at the end of the study, meaning that, once they had completed the study they were informed of the

true purpose of the study, given the opportunity to withdraw their data, and informed of available recourses in case of residual emotional discomfort. Fifty participants was the target number for this investigation, so participation was closed once that number was reached. This research was conducted with the explicit approval of the author's university ethical review board and in accordance with the British Psychological Society's regulations for research involving human participants.

### **Measures**

To measure negative attitudes toward gay men, I asked participants to respond to three statements from the short form of the Attitudes Toward Gay Men scale (or ATG, from Herek, 1988): "Sex between two men is just plain wrong", "I think male homosexuals are disgusting", and "Male homosexuality is a natural expression of sexuality in men" (reverse scored), ( $\alpha = .85$ ). Participants indicated negative attitudes toward men who have heterosexual anal sex by responding to modified versions of the three aforementioned items: "For a man, performing anal sex on a woman is just plain wrong", "I think men who perform anal sex on women are disgusting", and "Performing anal sex on women is a natural expression of sexuality in men" (reverse scored), ( $\alpha = .89$ ). Similarly, participants indicated their negative attitudes toward male cunnilingus by responding to modified versions of the latter three items in which the word "anal" was replaced with the word "oral", ( $\alpha = .88$ ). To measure negative attitudes toward lesbians, I asked participants to respond to three statements from the short form of the Attitudes Toward Lesbians Scale (or ATL, also from Herek, 1988): "Sex between two women is just plain wrong", "I think lesbians are disgusting", and "Female homosexuality is a natural expression of sexuality in women" (reverse scored), ( $\alpha = .88$ ).

Adherence to male role norms is a complex construct that varies between societies. It has many facets including status, toughness and stoicism (Thompson, Grisanti, & Pleck, 1985; Thompson & Pleck, 1986). The most relevant sub-scale for this current research was the norm of anti-femininity, as this most directly measured concern with emasculation through gender-atypical behaviours. Thus, participants also completed the Anti-femininity Norm Scale, a subscale of Thompson and Pleck's (1986) Male Role Norms Scale. Participants indicated their agreement with the following seven statements: "It bothers me when a man does something feminine", "A man whose hobbies are cooking, sewing, and going to the ballet probably wouldn't appeal to me", "It is a bit embarrassing for a man to have a job that is usually filled by a woman", "Unless he was really desperate, I would probably advise a man to keep looking rather than accept a job as a secretary", "If I heard about a man who was a hairdresser and a gourmet cook, I might wonder how masculine he was", "I think it's extremely important for a boy to be taught to cook, sew, clean the house, and take care of younger children" (reverse scored), "I might find it a little silly or embarrassing if a male friend of mine cried over a sad love scene in a movie" ( $\alpha = .79$ ).

Participants indicated their responses to all items in the questionnaire on 7-point Likert scales (1 = *Strongly disagree*, 7 = *Strongly agree*) and the order in which the measures were presented was randomized for each participant. All scales were scored using means (not totals) and higher scores on the relevant scales indicated more negative attitudes toward the four target groups and more adherence to anti-feminine norms. All reported Cronbach's alphas are for the measures as used in this current research. After completing all measures, participants were asked for basic demographic information

including age, gender, nationality and sexual orientation. All participants self-identified as heterosexual and Jamaican.

## Results

Means and standard deviations of negative attitudes toward all four target groups (gay men, men who have heterosexual anal sex, men who perform cunnilingus, and lesbians) are shown in Table 1. Participant age was not correlated with negative attitudes toward any of the four targets ( $-.15 < \text{all } r < -.07$ ,  $.53 < \text{all } p < .92$ ) and was not included in any subsequent analyses. Male and female participants did not differ in their negative attitudes toward lesbians,  $M = 4.31$ ,  $SD = 2.02$  vs.  $M = 3.54$ ,  $SD = 2.03$  respectively;  $t(45) = 1.30$ ,  $p = .20$ , or toward heterosexual anal sex  $M = 5.39$ ,  $SD = 2.03$  vs.  $M = 4.33$ ,  $SD = 2.05$  respectively;  $t(45) = 1.77$ ,  $p = .08$ . Male participants, compared to female participants, reported more negative attitudes toward gay men  $M = 5.42$ ,  $SD = 1.85$  vs.  $M = 4.00$ ,  $SD = 2.13$  respectively;  $t(45) = 2.44$ ,  $p = .02$ , and men who performed heterosexual cunnilingus,  $M = 3.19$ ,  $SD = 1.98$  vs.  $M = 1.71$ ,  $SD = .91$  respectively;  $t(45) = 3.27$ ,  $p = .002$ . Nonetheless, as there was no interaction between participant gender and target,  $F(3, 135) = .77$ ,  $p = .51$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .02$ , and as these differences were not central to the hypotheses of this study, data were collapsed across both sexes and gender was not included in any of the subsequent analyses.

### Relative Negativity toward the Four Target Groups

It was hypothesised that attitudes toward gay men would be more negative than attitudes toward lesbians, and that attitudes toward some forms of male *heterosexual* sex may be as negative as attitudes toward gay men and *more* negative than attitudes toward lesbians. The data were analysed using a one-way repeated measures analysis of variance

with four levels of the independent variable (Target: Gay men vs. Men who have heterosexual anal sex vs. Men perform cunnilingus vs. Lesbians), and Bonferroni-adjusted post-hoc comparisons.

All these hypotheses were supported by the data. There was a significant effect of target on negative attitudes:  $F(3, 147) = 29.30, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .37$ . As expected, attitudes toward gay men ( $M = 4.82$ ) were more negative than attitudes toward lesbians ( $M = 3.90$ ),  $p = .002$ . Attitudes toward men who performed cunnilingus ( $M = 2.65$ ) were less negative than both attitudes toward gay men,  $p < .001$ , and attitudes toward lesbians,  $p = .005$ . However, attitudes toward men who engaged in *heterosexual* anal sex ( $M = 4.88$ ) were not significantly different from attitudes toward gay men,  $p = 1.00$ , and were more negative than attitudes toward lesbians,  $p = .003$ .

### **Predictors of Negative Attitudes**

It was further hypothesised that adherence to male role norms should predict negative attitudes toward gay men, men who engaged in heterosexual anal sex, and men who performed cunnilingus, but not negative attitudes toward lesbians. Simple regression analyses supported these hypotheses (see Table 3). Adherence to anti-feminine male role norms predicted more negative attitudes toward gay men ( $\beta = .53, p < .001, R^2 = .28$ ), men who engaged in heterosexual anal sex ( $\beta = .51, p < .001, R^2 = .26$ ), and men who performed cunnilingus ( $\beta = .44, p = .001, R^2 = .19$ ). However, as hypothesised, male role norms did not predict negative attitudes toward lesbians ( $\beta = .03, p = .83, R^2 = .001$ ), which was true despite the fact that attitudes toward lesbians was highly correlated with attitudes toward gay men, and attitudes towards men who have heterosexual anal sex (see Table 2).

## Discussion

This research adopted an original perspective on anti-gay prejudice in Jamaica; specifically, it investigated the strength of Jamaican's negative attitudes toward four groups – gay men, lesbians, men who have anal sex with women and men who perform oral sex on women – comparing these negative attitudes to each other, and investigating whether they were predicted by acceptance of anti-feminine male role norms. As predicted, attitudes toward gay men were more negative than attitudes toward lesbians. Also, though attitudes toward men who perform cunnilingus were less negative than attitudes toward the other three groups, attitudes toward men who have *heterosexual* anal sex were not distinguishable from attitudes toward gay men, and *more negative* than attitudes toward lesbians. Furthermore, acceptance of anti-feminine male role norms positively predicted negative attitudes toward gay men, heterosexual anal sex and heterosexual cunnilingus, but not toward lesbians. These findings suggest that the primary concern of sexual restrictiveness in Jamaica is not the protection of heterosexuality, but the preservation of gender role norms, particularly for men. Anti-gay prejudice, then, could be one just facet of a broader set of strong, sexually restrictive attitudes. Below, I discuss these findings in terms of study limitations and future research, as well as implications for reducing anti-gay prejudice in Jamaica.

### Limitations and Future Research

Though the sample size was large enough to find the hypothesised significant effects, it is worth noting that the sample was relatively small ( $N = 50$ ). A strength of this study is that it used members of the Jamaican public as participants, which permits more confidence in the external validity of the findings than would the more commonly used

student participants (Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010). Nonetheless, it must be noted that the small sample size, and the fact that this is a single study, limit the generalizability of our findings. As this is the first empirical study on this topic, the results are quite novel and stand to make a meaningful addition to our understanding of Jamaican sexual prejudice. However, for that same reason, these findings should be seen as preliminary and suggestive, rather than definitive, and replications of this research with larger, representative participant samples will increase confidence in the results.

It is also worth noting the within-participants design of the study and that all measures were explicit. This increases the possibility of demand characteristic and self-presentation biases. Efforts were made to reduce these biases in responses; participants were repeatedly reminded of their anonymity and of the fact that there were no right or wrong answers. Furthermore, explicit attitudes were the focus of this study and prior research has shown that Jamaicans are typically not strongly motivated to suppress or hide prejudice against sexual minorities (West & Hewstone, 2012b). Finally, even though self-presentation biases may have decreased (or perhaps increased) the negativity of the reported attitudes, there is no compelling reason to suspect that they would have affected the *relative* levels of negativity, nor the relationships between the variables. As such, these data still support the current hypotheses. Nonetheless, future research using measures that circumvent demand characteristics would lend further support to these findings.

It is also worth noting that these data are purely cross-sectional. While this is not relevant for the relative levels of negativity toward the four groups, it prevents the investigation of causal relationships. Thus, these data cannot show that acceptance of

male role norms *increases* negativity toward certain sexual practices, only that it is related to this negativity. Future research using longitudinal designs, or experimental research that manipulates participants' acceptance of male role norms, could be used to show these causal effects.

Finally, it is not surprising that acceptance of *male* role norms did not predict negativity toward lesbians. Prior research (e.g., West & Cowell, 2014) has identified predictors of prejudice against lesbians (e.g., gender, education, religion), and it is likely that perceptions of the roles of women (e.g., measures of hostile and benevolent sexism; Glick & Fiske, 1996) would also be strong predictors of responses to female sexual behaviour. Future research using these measures would be useful for disentangling the different causes of antipathy toward lesbians and gay men in Jamaica. Broader research on sexism in Jamaica could also increase our understanding of the importance of emasculation, and why certain sexual behaviours in males are viewed more negatively than the same behaviours in females.

### **Implications for Pro-Gay Activism in Jamaica**

As is the case with the international media attention, and the empirical research, activists' efforts to reduce sexual prejudice in Jamaica have largely focused on attitudes toward gay men and lesbians (Clunis, 2004; "Gay protest at Emancipation Park," 2010; Walters, 2013) and often on the role of the church in promoting and preserving these anti-gay attitudes (Spaulding, 2014; West, 2012). However, the findings of this study suggest that the preservation of gender roles may in fact be a central concern of Jamaica's restrictive sexual mores, and that anti-gay prejudice, however extreme, may be a derivative of this primary goal.

If this is the case, strategies that seek to reduce anti-gay prejudice, without addressing the underlying gender role norms, may be compared to cutting off the top of a weed while leaving the root intact. It may be difficult to have a lasting effect on anti-gay prejudice without addressing the underlying attitudes toward gender and sexual behaviour. Also, it may be easier or more effective to accomplish reductions in anti-gay prejudice *indirectly* by first challenging the importance of clearly delineated gender role norms, a strategy that has been suggested in other societies (Herek, 1986). Furthermore, the relationship between pro-gay lobbies and the Jamaican government has previously been antagonistic, as the goals of these two groups appeared to be in conflict (Rose, 2004). However, a strategy that focused on altering perceptions of masculinity in Jamaica may provide common ground for both groups; both the Jamaican government and pro-gay activists may stand to gain from initiatives that decrease reliance on ideals of anti-femininity and increase adherence to different masculine ideals such as status or responsibility.

### **Conclusions**

Anti-gay prejudice is a serious, international problem, occurring in a large number of culturally distinct countries (Ottoosson, 2009). Prejudice reduction strategies that are effective in some of these countries may be less effective or ineffective in others. An understanding of the specific cultural milieu, and of the drivers of sexual prejudice in these societies, is essential for the development of effective strategies to improve attitudes and promote equal rights for gay men and lesbians. This current research suggests that anti-gay prejudice in Jamaica, particularly prejudice against gay men, is related to a broader set of sexually restrictive attitudes concerned primarily with

emasculation and gender role norms. More research is needed to improve our understanding of these gender norms. Thus far, however, these results suggest that it may be difficult to reduce anti-gay prejudice in Jamaica while leaving other sexually restrictive attitudes intact; it seems unlikely that Jamaicans will respond positively to gay men and lesbians while heterosexual anal and oral sex continue to be vilified.

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**Tables***Table 1. Means and Standard Deviations of Negative Attitudes Toward all Target Groups*

	Mean	SD
Gay men	4.82 <sup>a</sup>	2.08
Men who have heterosexual anal sex	4.88 <sup>a</sup>	2.14
Men who perform cunnilingus	2.65 <sup>b</sup>	1.85
Lesbians	3.90 <sup>c</sup>	2.08

Notes: (1) Higher values indicate more negative attitudes. (2) Mean values that do not differ significantly at the 5% level share superscripts.

*Table 2. Correlations Between all Variables Measured in this Study.*

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
1. Male Role Norms	1				
2. Attitudes toward gay men	.53***	1			
3. Attitudes toward heterosexual anal sex	.51***	.79***	1		
4. Attitudes toward heterosexual cunnilingus	.44**	.48***	.52***	1	
5. Attitudes toward lesbians	.03	.68***	.60***	.21	1

Notes: (1) Pearson's  $r$  values shown. (2) \* =  $p < .05$ , \*\* =  $p < .01$ , \*\*\* =  $p < .001$

*Table 3. Results of simple regression analyses in which anti-femininity norms predict attitudes toward all 4 target groups.*

Target group	<i>b</i>	<i>S.E.</i>	$\beta$	<i>p</i>	$R^2$
Gay men	.82	.19	.53	< .001	.28
Men who have heterosexual anal sex	.80	.20	.51	< .001	.26
Men who perform heterosexual cunnilingus	.60	.18	.44	.001	.19
Lesbians	.05	.22	.03	.83	.001