Abstract

Jamaica has earned an international reputation for severe sexual prejudice: perhaps disproportionately so compared to other severely anti-LGBT societies. Until recently, however, no quantitative empirical research had investigated Jamaica's sexual prejudice, leaving the prejudice poorly understood and methods of reducing it unclear. This article reviews the past 15 years of empirical research on Jamaican anti-LGBT prejudice. It situates Jamaica within the global context, explains the current understanding of the severity and nature of the problem, evaluates solutions currently being explored and suggests promising strategies based on available evidence. Importantly, this article also reflects on lessons learned from Jamaica that are relevant for other severely anti-LGBT societies.

Keywords: Jamaica; gay; sexual prejudice; international

In 2006, the island nation of Jamaica was dubbed ‘the most homophobic place on Earth’ (Padgett, 2006, p. 1). This perception spread rapidly and Jamaica’s sexual prejudice became the subject of increasing international attention. This includes a number of films and television programmes (e.g., Adepitan, 2014; Fink, 2013), radio programmes (e.g., West & Geering, 2013), and newspaper articles (e.g., West, 2014), many of which were commissioned, produced, and distributed outside of Jamaica and have helped shape international perspectives on Jamaica.

International icons of Jamaican culture and society have also played a role. For example, in 2015, Marlon James spoke of the difficulty of living in Jamaica as a gay man shortly after he became the first Jamaican author to win the prestigious *Man Booker Prize* (James, 2015). In his words, he was so desperate to escape that, “I had to leave my home country – whether in a coffin or a plane.” (p. 1). There have also been several international protests blocking the performances of certain Jamaican musical performers (Campbell, 2012; Clunis, 2004b; Walters, 2013) on the grounds that their lyrics encouraged deadly violence against gay men and lesbians (Chin, 1997; Ellis, 2011). Many of these protests were planned and organised by Jamaicans or members of the Jamaican diaspora living abroad.

These efforts were part of the necessary work of raising awareness and have contributed to the international pressure placed on Jamaica to alter some of its anti-gay laws (Rose, 2004). Furthermore, this increased awareness likely created the atmosphere in which much of the subsequent research could be conducted. However, given this widespread reputation, there are important questions that must be factually addressed concerning Jamaica’s sexual prejudice. Specifically, how does Jamaica compare to other severely anti-LGBT societies, and to what extent does it merit its extreme reputation? What is currently *known* about sexual prejudice in Jamaica, and what research supports this knowledge? What lessons, if any, can be taken from Jamaica to help understand and reduce sexual prejudice in other societies? By reviewing the available body of relevant research, this article addresses

these questions and suggests strategies for tackling sexual prejudice internationally.

Understanding Jamaica's Sexual Prejudice in the Global Context

Sexual prejudice can be defined as negative beliefs, attitudes or behaviours toward others based on their sexual orientation (Herek, 2000, 2004). It is a global problem (Carroll & Itaborahy, 2015) with consequences both wide-reaching and profound; these range from subtle or implicit negativity, social ostracism and avoidance (K. J. Anderson & Kanner, 2011; Herek, 2004) to reduced legal rights and protections (Araiza, 2010; Hollander, 2009), to hate crimes and murder (Willis, 2004). All these forms of prejudice, even the seemingly less severe, can have long-term negative consequences for the physical and psychological health and well-being of gay men and lesbians (Meyer, 2003).

Sexual prejudice is a global problem and Jamaica is best understood in a global context. However, readers should be aware of a tension that can arise when discussing the prejudice of one minority community toward another minority communities. While it is important to raise awareness of the genuine severity of Jamaica's sexual prejudice, there is also an awareness of how this could play into global (inaccurate) stereotypes of anti-LGBT prejudice in Black communities.

This is not a trivial problem. Sexual prejudice of Black communities is often exaggerated, and receives disproportionate attention. For example, there is a widespread belief that sexual prejudice is more severe in African American communities than in White American communities (Lewis, 2003). However, empirical studies that measure levels of sexual prejudice often fail to find stronger prejudice in Black communities (Herek & Capitanio, 1995), especially when other factors, such as religion, are accounted for (Schulte & Battle, 2004). The situation is best described as complex. Though African Americans may sometimes show higher levels of some kinds of prejudice, a large scale study encompassing over seven thousand Black American participants, thirty-four thousand White American participants, and thirty one separate surveys, found that Black people, compared to White

people, were more supportive of gay civil liberties, more likely to support laws prohibiting anti-gay discrimination, and much more opposed to anti-gay employment discrimination (Lewis, 2003). With this in mind, in each section below, every attempt is made to paint a fair, and accurate, perception of Jamaica as it compares to other nations.

Legal and Structural Prejudice against Sexual Minorities in Jamaica

In terms of legal rights and protections, Jamaica is certainly not the worst country in the world. Carroll and Itaborahy (2015) reviewed the legal situation of 193 United Nations member states, comparing the legal situation for sexual and gender identifying minorities in these nations. The situation in Jamaica undoubtedly bad: Jamaica is not one of the eight countries with constitutional prohibitions against discrimination based on sexual orientation, one of the 18 countries in which same-sex couples can marry, one of the 35 countries that recognise hate crimes based on sexual orientation, one of the 62 countries that prohibit employment discrimination based on sexual orientation, or one of the 118 countries in which private same-sex acts between consenting adults are legal.

Jamaica is part of a minority of countries (i.e., 75 out of 193) in which some private same-sex acts between consenting adults are *illegal*. In Jamaica, anal sex is punishable by up to 10 years in prison with hard labour; among Jamaicans, this is commonly referred to as the "buggery law" (Hron, Dayle, Mcknight, & Carr, 2003; Jamaica Ministry of Justice, 1969; Wheatle, 2012). Most Jamaicans support the "buggery law" and are resistant to the idea that gay men and lesbians have a right to legal equality (West & Cowell, 2015). In theory, these laws also target heterosexual couples and are not relevant for lesbians. In practice, however, they are used as a pretext to define homosexuality as illegal and to incite extra-judicial punishments or violence (J-FLAG, 2013; White & Carr, 2005). There is also evidence that violence and homicide against LGBT Jamaicans is treated less seriously than similar violence against heterosexual Jamaicans (Wheatle, 2013). Several other Caribbean nations (e.g., Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago) have similar laws, a legacy of the British Empire that once

held these nations as colonies (Jackman, 2016). However, as neighbouring Caribbean nations have lower levels of sexual prejudice than Jamaica (Boxill, Lewis, Russell, & Bailey, 2007), Jamaica's sexual prejudice cannot be accounted for on a purely legal basis, and likely has important cultural explanations.

There are, of course, other countries in the world in which legalised sexual prejudice is much more severe. Jamaica is *not* one of the 8 countries in which same sex acts are officially punishable by death (e.g., Afghanistan, Pakistan). Nor is Jamaica one of the 5 countries in which this death penalty continues to be implemented in contemporary society (e.g., Iran, Saudi Arabia), nor one of the 4 countries (e.g., Lithuania, Russia) in which the 'propaganda of homosexuality' is criminalized (Carroll & Itaborahy, 2015).

There are also other forms of state-sponsored violence and aggression that exist in other countries but do not exist in Jamaica. For example, though same-sex acts are criminalized, Jamaica nonetheless has a number of active pro-gay rights organizations and multiple 'Pride' events (i.e., in which LGBTI Jamaicans can be public, open and positive about their sexual and gender orientations) have recently taken place on the island (Spaulding, 2015; Tomlinson, 2015). This must be held up in contrast countries with Iran, in which the president denied the existence of gay people (Goldman, 2007), and in contrast with the anti-gay camps in Chechnya, Russia, in which gay men are beaten and tortured (Vasilyeva & Roslyakov, 2017). Thus, while Jamaica's legal situation is bad, certainly worse than most countries, it is also far from the worst in the world.

Anti-LGBT Violence and Negative Behaviour in Jamaica

Though far from one of the poorest countries in the world (falling in the top 70 poorest countries), Jamaica is a violent country with a very high homicide rate. With 43 homicides per 100,000 people, it is ranked 5th highest in the world, just below El Salvador (109 per 100,000), Honduras (64 per 100,000), Venezuela (57 per 100,000) and the U.S. Virgin Islands (53 per 100,000). By comparison, the continental United States is ranked 91st in the world

with a murder rate of 5 per 100,000 people, and the United Kingdom is ranked 183rd in the world, with a murder rate of 1 per 100,000 people (UNODC, 2015). Most homicide victims (> 89%) are male, and almost two thirds of homicides (approximately 59%) occurred as a result of either disputes or reprisals (Lemard & Hemenway, 2006). Thus, Jamaica can be fairly described as a violent country where, even in comparison to similar nations, personal arguments are more likely to escalate into deadly confrontations. This context should be taken into account when discussing anti-LGBT violence in Jamaica as well.

In Jamaica, it is generally accepted that "anti-gay murders and gay bashing incidents" occur with some regularity (Gay lobby rebuked, 2008, p. 1). However, while the legal status of sexual minorities is a matter of official and public record, it is much more difficult to obtain accurate indications of the frequency of anti-gay violence. Between 2009 and 2013, J-Flag (Jamaica's largest and most prominent gay-rights organization) documented 213 cases of violence against individuals due to their sexual orientation (J-FLAG, 2013). However, that figure should be treated with caution. Many instances of anti-LGBT violence likely go unreported, as is generally the case with sexual or sexuality-based crimes (Lisak & Miller, 2002). Conversely, J-FLAG themselves admit in their report that "there is . . . little evidence to substantiate any of these claims. The police have very little documented reports of violence against LGBT people and those recorded by J- FLAG have not all been investigated." (p. 1). Thus, there is also the possibility of over-reporting.

What is noteworthy, and what may have contributed to Jamaica's international reputation, is the often gruesome and shocking nature of these attacks. For example, when Brian Williamson, one of Jamaica's most prominent and vocal gay rights activists, was stabbed to death in 2004, a crowd reportedly rejoiced over Williamson's mutilated body (Clunis, 2004a). In 2012, when a gay student was discovered in a compromising position, a crowd of fellow students pursued him, stating violent intentions and calling for his death (Pearson, 2012). In 2013, when Dwayne Jones was murdered at a party for wearing women's

clothing, he was beaten, stabbed, shot and run over by a car before he died (Martinez, 2013).

Such incidents easily capture the attention of the international media. However, reliable, empirical research on anti-gay behaviours is difficult to come by. What is known is that a large proportion of Jamaicans (though slightly less than half) commit or condone some form of verbally or physically abusive behaviours toward sexual minorities (West, 2017; West & Cowell, 2015). Furthermore, when considering less extreme negative behaviours, the picture is somewhat clearer. Most Jamaicans report an unwillingness to accept a gay man or lesbian in certain social roles, particularly those that include friendship, imply acceptance at work, or involve interactions with children (West & Cowell, 2015; West, Husnu, & Lipps, 2015). Young sexual minorities in Jamaica are also at a high risk of ostracism from their own families and are more likely to be expelled from the family home, making them more vulnerable (J-FLAG, 2013; Johnson, 2016). Thus, though it is difficult to precisely identify the rates of many negative behaviours, it seems fair to say that Jamaica is an unusually violent and dangerous place for sexual minorities in which many forms of negative behaviour are common.

Negative attitudes

Attitudes toward a group can be defined as (usually negative) affective responses to the group, such as fear, disgust or disapproval (Hewstone, Rubin, & Willis, 2002). These are generally the most widely researched aspect of prejudice (Devine, Evett, & Vasques-Suson, 1996; Riek, Mania, & Gaertner, 2006), and anti-LGBT prejudice in Jamaica is no exception to that general rule.

A wealth of qualitative research has investigated Jamaican anti-LGBT attitudes through the lenses of public discourse, literature, and songs (Charles, 2011; Chin, 1997; Cowell, 2011; Cowell & Saunders, 2011; Farquharson, 2005; Sharpe & Pinto, 2006). All of these point to extreme negative attitudes toward sexual minorities. Anti-gay rhetoric is commonplace at all levels of Jamaican society, from popular entertainment to the highest

political strata (Cowell & Saunders, 2011). Sexual minorities in Jamaica are widely seen as perverse, or sinful, similar to those who sexually abuse children (Hope, 2006; Salih, 2007; "Will J-Flag, other rights groups support paedophiles?," 2011). Popular music in Jamaica (i.e., dancehall music) contains lyrics that, whether figuratively or literally, encourage listeners to murder sexual minorities by burning or shooting them (Chin, 1997; Saunders, 2003).

The quantitative research that followed supported these claims. In the (albeit not peer-reviewed) reports of two large-scale surveys (Boxill et al., 2011, 2012) Boxill and colleagues found that Jamaicans were generally accepting of a diverse range of people (e.g., racial or political outgroups), but extremely negative toward sexual minorities, even compared to neighbours in the Caribbean. The first peer-reviewed research on the topic quickly followed, confirming that Jamaican attitudes toward sexual minorities were indeed extremely negative, remained negative across many varied sections of society, and were more negative than anti-gay attitudes in other countries, even among the well-educated (West & Cowell, 2015; West & Hewstone, 2012a). Furthermore, while Jamaicans are not less motivated than Britons or Americans to control their prejudices in general, they are significantly less concerned about controlling their prejudices against gay people, indicating that such attitudes are socially acceptable in Jamaica (West & Hewstone, 2012b). The resoundingly clear message of a decade of research is that attitudes toward sexual minorities in Jamaica are indeed extremely negative and motivation to reduce or hide anti-LGBT attitudes is very low.

Causes of Sexual Prejudice in Jamaica

Having situated the severity of Jamaica's anti-LGBT prejudice in the global context, it is important to understand the causes of this prejudice. Until recently, sexual prejudice in Jamaica received very little empirical attention. However, a wealth of research in other countries (in particular North America) has investigated key predictors of sexual prejudice (e.g., Glenn & Weaver, 1979; Hegarty, 2010; Herek, 1988, 2000; Herek & Capitanio, 1995;

Herek & Glunt, 1993; Herek & Gonzalez-Rivera, 2006; Irwin & Thompson, 1978; Jensen, Gambles, & Olsen, 1988; Schneider & Lewis, 1984; Sherrod & Nardi, 1998; Vincent, Parrott, & Peterson, 2011; Warwick, Chase, & Aggleton, 2004; Whitley, 1990). This research has involved a variety of methodologies and has taken place over a number of decades; thus its conclusions are very well established.

Nonetheless, one cannot extrapolate from these largely North American data to assume that the same variables are important in Jamaica. Predictors of sexual prejudice have been shown to vary significantly by group, both between countries and within the same country (Andersen & Fetner, 2008; S. J. Smith, Axelton, & Saucier, 2009). For example, Lewis (2003) found that demographic variables were much weaker predictors of anti-gay prejudice in Black Americans than in White Americans. It is thus important to rely on studies conducted *in Jamaica* and to compare their results with those of prior research. In the sections below, I organise the predictors of Jamaican sexual prejudice into 4 groupings: (1) those that apply both in an out of Jamaica (education and income); (2) those that are important in other contexts but appear to be less important in Jamaica (age and religion); (3) those that are unique to Jamaica but of questionable predictive value (dancehall music); and (4) those that are of particular importance in Jamaica (gender and gender norms).

Education and Income

Prior research in North America and Europe shows clear relationships between education, income, and anti-LGBT prejudice (Herek & Gonzalez-Rivera, 2006; Rayside, 1992; Rowatt, LaBouff, Johnson, Froese, & Tsang, 2009). This is in line with the decades-old, well-established, wider body of research showing that higher levels of education and income are predictive of lower levels of prejudice more generally (Maykovich, 1975; Wagner & Zlck, 1995), and linking these relationships to variations in cognitive abilities and perceived threat (Hodson & Busseri, 2012). Research in Jamaica has also found these relationships; wealthier and more educated Jamaicans tend to show less sexual prejudice (West, *under review*; West &

Cowell, 2015). This finding is not controversial and does not suggest unique avenues of investigation or activism in Jamaica. However, it can be a useful reminder that explanations for sexual prejudice are also found outside of social psychology, and that solutions to sexual prejudice may involve a variety of non-social-psychological (e.g., economic) strategies.

Age and Religion

Prior research in North American contexts has reliably shown that age is an important predictor of sexual prejudice (e.g., Andersen & Fetner, 2008; Glenn & Weaver, 1979; Herek & Gonzalez-Rivera, 2006; Lewis, 2003). In general, older individuals respond more negatively to sexual minorities than do younger individuals. In many contexts, this is at least partially explained by the fact that social attitudes form at a relatively young age and are subsequently resistant to change; older adults tend to retain the more conservative attitudes typical of the social norms of the past (Andersen & Fetner, 2008).

However, research in Jamaica has found the relationship between age and sexual prejudice to be absent, weak or unreliable (West & Hewstone, 2012a, 2012b). Using a large (N = 1,942), representative sample of Jamaican participants, West and Cowell (2015) found that older age predicted more opposition to gay rights, but did not predict negative attitudes or social distance toward sexual minorities. Older age also predicted *less* negative behaviour toward sexual minorities. The simplest interpretation of these findings is that, in contrast with tendencies found in many other countries, the social norms concerning sexual minorities in Jamaica are not changing with time.

Prior research in North America and Europe has also highlighted the importance of religion for predicting anti-gay prejudice (Herek, 1988; Herek & Gonzalez-Rivera, 2006; Rowatt et al., 2006, 2009; Whitley, 2009). Religious individuals, particularly those in fundamentalist groups, tend to have more negative attitudes toward sexual minorities, and to be more opposed to legal equality. However, similar to age, religion does not appear to be an important predictor of anti-gay prejudice in Jamaica.

It is true that many Jamaicans who oppose sexual equality or encourage negativity toward sexual minorities cite religion as their primary motivation (e.g., "Gay lobby rebuked - Church says won't accept homosexual lifestyle in Jamaica," 2008; Kokoski, 2010; Witter, 2012). However, initial empirical investigations revealed that religiosity was a relatively weak and inconsistent predictor of anti-gay prejudice, appearing less important than gender, education, income, or a preference for dancehall music (West & Cowell, 2015). Religion appeared to be more of a post-hoc justification than a genuine motivation.

A caveat, however, is that the role of religion in Jamaica may be evolving. Recently, pro-gay activists have begun to challenge many aspects of Jamaica's anti-gay climate, and religious organisations have formed the most ardent opposition to these challenges (Skyers, 2014; Spaulding, 2014; West, 2017). A number of religiously motivated anti-gay activist groups have been formed for the specific purpose of opposing equal rights for gays and lesbians in Jamaica and protecting the "buggery law": i.e., the law prohibiting consensual anal sex between adults (Buckley, 2012; Dunkley-Willis, 2013).

A noteworthy manifestation of these efforts is the 'Love March', an annual demonstration that began in 2012 for the purpose of opposing homosexuality and other sexual behaviours that do not align with the dominant Protestant Christian belief system (Welsh, 2013; West, 2012). This is not the only such demonstration. In 2014, 25,000 Jamaicans marched in the centre of Kingston as a form of protest to "resist the homosexual agenda and the repealing of the buggery act" (Skyers, 2014). This perhaps indicates a crystallisation of religious attitudes toward sexual minorities or a strengthening link between religious identity and responses to sexual minorities. Thus, though religion may not have previously been a central factor, future evidence may reveal that the importance of religion for Jamaican sexual prejudice is increasing (West, *under review*).

Dancehall

Dancehall is worth discussing because of its relative uniqueness, the international

attention it has received, and its suggested role in promoting anti-gay prejudice in Jamaica. Dancehall can be difficult to explain to an international audience. It is a form of music that originated in Jamaica in the late 1970's; it is now one of Jamaica's most popular genres and widely appreciated internationally as well (Hickling, 2004; Hope, 2006; Pinnock, 2007). The topics in dancehall music are many and varied, but it is often used as a cultural tool to delineate the borders of prescribed and proscribed behaviour. Relevant here, dancehall is sometimes used to police the borders of appropriate gender-based behaviour, encouraging heterosexuality and polygamy in men, and discouraging cunnilingus, anal sex and homosexuality (Sharpe & Pinto, 2006). Such messages are so common in dancehall that is has been described as having a "fundamental preoccupation with sex and sexuality" (Pinnock, 2007, p. 48).

Many dancehall songs contain messages that are unambiguously anti-LGBT and often violently so. Well-known examples of such lyrics include, "Ful dem up a kappa shat . . . Chi-chi man fi ded an dats a fak [Pump them full of copper shots (bullets) . . . Gay men should die and that's a fact]" (Farquharson, 2005, p 109), and "Aal bati-man fi ded [All homosexuals must die]" (Chin, 1997, p. 128). However, there remains some debate about whether the songs are intended by the artists (and/or interpreted by the listeners) as explicit encouragements to murder sexual minorities, or whether they are simply expressions of disapproval about sexually deviant behaviour (Clunis, 2004a; Salih, 2007).

Nonetheless, whatever the intention of the artists, many dancehall lyrics have been interpreted as violent hate-speech by international bodies. Consequently a number of Jamaican performers have been banned from performing internationally and some have had their international travel visas revoked (Campbell, 2012; Clunis, 2004b; Walters, 2013). These restrictions may have led to a reduction in the explicitly violent anti-gay lyrics, though there is some debate about whether this represents a genuine change of culture, or a form of neo-colonialism in which Western values are forced on other, less powerful nations (Wahab,

2016).

Furthermore, despite the intense media attention given to dancehall music, very little empirical research has investigated its role in Jamaican anti-gay prejudice. West and Cowell's (2015) representative survey of 1,942 Jamaican adults found that a preference for dancehall music was associated with greater negativity toward sexual minorities; an effect stronger than those of increased age or religiosity. Furthermore, the independent relationship between dancehall and anti-LGBT prejudice persisted after both education and income were taken into account, disentangling its effects from the effects of lower socio-economic status, with which the form of music is stereotypically associated (Hope, 2006).

Nonetheless, the specific role and importance of dancehall music are not clear. Dancehall's association with anti-LGBT prejudice was weaker than those of male gender, lower education and lower income (West & Cowell, 2015). A follow-up large scale survey (N = 912) that included more predictors of sexual prejudice (e.g., prior social interactions with sexual minorities; see West, *under review*) also failed to find a reliable relationship between a preference for dancehall music and anti-LGBT prejudice. Perhaps most importantly, all research on the topic to date has been either qualitative (e.g., Chin, 1997; Saunders, 2003) or correlational (West, *under review*; West & Cowell, 2015). Thus, there is as yet no evidence that dancehall music is a *cause* of anti-LGBT prejudice rather than an *expression* of that prejudice.

Gender and Gender Norms

Prior research in other countries has identified gender and gender norms as important predictors of anti-LBGT prejudice (Bosson, Weaver, Caswell, & Burnaford, 2012; Parrott, 2009; Tee & Hegarty, 2006; Vincent et al., 2011); men tend to be more prejudiced than women, gay men are targets of more vehement prejudice than lesbians, and anti-LGBT prejudice is strongly associated with displays of masculinity. This is the case in Jamaica as well; both the importance of gender norms, and unique aspects of gender norms in Jamaican

culture, make them worthy of discussion.

All the available empirical research to date suggests that gender is the most important and most reliable predictor of anti-LGBT prejudice in Jamaica (West, *under review*, 2016a, 2017; West & Cowell, 2015). This is demonstrated in multiple ways. West and Cowell (2015) found that, for some outcomes (e.g., social distance and opposition to gay rights) the predictive power of gender eclipsed that of all other predictors *combined* (i.e., education, income, dancehall music, religiosity and age). West (*under review*) found similar evidence for the primacy of gender even when the frequency of prior interactions with sexual minorities was also included as a predictor. Furthermore, not only is it the case that Jamaican men tend to respond more negatively to sexual minorities than do Jamaican women, it is also the case that Jamaicans overall tend to respond more negatively to gay men than to lesbians (West & Cowell, 2015). This is not meant to suggest that lesbians in Jamaica do not experience severe, or even life-threatening prejudice; they do (Hron et al., 2003; J-FLAG, 2013; West & Cowell, 2015). However, it is an indication that male gender is a central factor in Jamaican anti-LGBT prejudice when considering either the perpetrators or the victims.

Qualitative research also suggests that this is the case. Though the international and empirical focus has largely been on prejudice against gay men and lesbians, there are several kinds of sexual restrictiveness in Jamaica that concern *heterosexual* practices (Chin, 1997; LaFont, 2001; Sharpe & Pinto, 2006). Similarly, much attention has been paid to anti-gay dancehall lyrics; however many of the songs contain similar levels of negativity toward men who engage in heterosexual oral sex and anal sex as toward men who engage in gay sex (for reviews see Farquharson, 2005; Hippolyte, 2004; Pinnock, 2007; Saunders, 2003). Several songs encourage listeners to "kill pussy-sucker" and state that "bow cat, sodomite, batty man fi get assassination", ["people who perform oral sex, lesbians and gay men should be assassinated"] (Outrage!, 2010). Recently, a small-scale quantitative investigation (N = 50) by West (2016a) also found that negativity toward heterosexual anal sex was greater than

negativity toward lesbians and not distinguishable from negativity toward gay men.

These findings suggest that prejudice against non-heterosexuals is only one aspect of Jamaican sexual prejudice and may not in fact be the central or dominant aspect. Rather, Hope (2006), suggests that dancehall lyrics are primarily concerned with the dangers of emasculation, and that homosexuality's importance stems from its powerful potential to emasculate and disrupt gender norms. If this is correct, the central goal of Jamaican sexual restrictions would be to police the boundaries of gender and, in particular, masculinity (Hippolyte, 2004; Pinnock, 2007; Saunders, 2003; West, 2010). Quantitative evidence supports this hypothesis, finding that acceptance of anti-feminine male role norms similarly predicts negativity toward gay men, heterosexual anal sex and men who perform cunnilingus in Jamaica (West, 2016a). All this suggests that gender and gender norms should be central to strategies aimed at dealing with sexual prejudice in Jamaica, a point discussed further in the following sections.

Solutions to Sexual Prejudice in Jamaica

Having discussed the severity, extent and possible root causes of sexual prejudice in Jamaica, the following section explores ways to potentially reduce this prejudice. This section will be further split into two sub-sections: (1) strategies that have been attempted thus far and (2) strategies that are most strongly suggested by the available research. As before, I acknowledge that certain predictors (e.g., education and income) are important both in Jamaica and internationally. However, I do not discuss these in this section as they are not unique to the Jamaican context and no specific research has investigated their effectiveness as interventions in Jamaica.

Previously Attempted Strategies: Intergroup Contact and Collective Action

Intergroup contact. Intergroup contact refers to (positive) interactions between members of different social groups (Allport, 1954). Over 60 years of empirical evidence demonstrate that contact usually improves intergroup attitudes and reduces intergroup

hostility (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006, 2008). This is particularly true when contact takes place under its optimal conditions of mutual goals, cooperation, equal status, and approval of authority. However, even in sub-optimal conditions, contact generally continues to be effective (Brown & Hewstone, 2005; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Support for contact's effectiveness comes from a variety of countries and social contexts, and contact has been shown to reduce prejudice against many different types of outgroups, including those defined by ethnicity (Dhont, Roets, & Van Hiel, 2011), nationality or immigrant status (Voci & Hewstone, 2003), mental health status (Evans-Lacko et al., 2013; West, Hewstone, & Lolliot, 2014), gender (Taschler & West, 2016), or sexual orientation (Herek & Capitanio, 1996; Herek & Glunt, 1993; Lemm, 2006; Vonofakou, Hewstone, & Voci, 2007). Indeed, meta-analyses reveal that contact reduces sexual prejudice more effectively than any other form of prejudice (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006, 2008).

Across many contexts, contact is one of the most frequently tested and widely-researched prejudice reduction strategies (Oskamp & Jones, 2000), and the Jamaican context is no exception. Though very few empirical papers have investigated strategies to reduce sexual prejudice in Jamaica, contact (or contact-based strategies) have been investigated multiple times (West, *under review*; West & Hewstone, 2012a; West et al., 2015). To date, all research on direct contact in Jamaica has been correlational, not experimental. Thus, it is not yet possible to determine a *causal* effect of contact on prejudice. However, available research clearly shows that higher levels of contact are associated with lower levels of anti-gay prejudice. This relationship is stronger in Jamaica than in countries with lower levels of sexual prejudice (West & Hewstone, 2012a). It has been found in large, representative samples of Jamaican participants (N = 912) and it remains significant even after controlling for other important predictors of sexual prejudice in Jamaica (West, *under review*).

Nonetheless, despite contact's success, it does have limitations. Relevant to the current situation is the difficulty or infeasibility of implementing contact-based strategies in volatile

environments where members of the dominant group may not desire contact and where members of the stigmatized group may take on substantial risk when engaging in contact (Asbrock, Gutenbrunner, & Wagner, 2013; Dixon, Durrheim, & Tredoux, 2005). Violence against sexual minorities is not uncommon in Jamaica, which makes intergroup contact a high-risk strategy. Open and socially accepted prejudice against sexual minorities also makes optimal conditions difficult to obtain (West & Hewstone, 2012b).

However, recent research has identified interventions that take advantage of contact's effects while minimising its difficulty and risk. Imagined intergroup contact (or simply, imagined contact) combined the wealth of evidence for the effectiveness of direct intergroup contact (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006) with well-established evidence that mental imagery can have effects similar to those of real behaviour (Knudstrup, Segrest, & Hurley, 2003; Kosslyn, Ganis, & Thompson, 2006). Together, these lines of research suggested that imagining positive intergroup encounters should have many of the same benefits as actually experiencing those encounters, including reduced prejudice (Crisp & Turner, 2012).

Though research on imagined contact began much more recently than research on direct contact (see Turner, Crisp, & Lambert, 2007), an impressive volume of evidence already supports its effectiveness in a variety of social contexts and with many different types of stigmatized groups (e.g., Husnu & Crisp, 2010b; Turner & Crisp, 2010; Turner & West, 2011; Turner, West, & Christie, 2013; Vezzali, Capozza, Giovanni, & Stathi, 2011; West & Bruckmüller, 2013; West & Greenland, 2016; West, Holmes, & Hewstone, 2011; West, Turner, & Levita, 2015). Alternative explanations for imagined contact's effects have also been ruled out including demand characteristics (Turner & Crisp, 2010; West, Hotchin, & Wood, 2017; West, Turner, et al., 2015) cognitive load, stereotype priming (Turner et al., 2007), and general positive affect (Stathi & Crisp, 2008).

Imagined contact has also been shown to reduce sexual prejudice in Jamaica. West, Husnu, and Lipps (2015) found that imagined contact increased positive attitudes toward and

social acceptance of gay men in Jamaica –important outcomes for a stigmatized group who are often told that they have no place in their own society (Adepitan, 2014; Hron et al., 2003; West & Geering, 2013). These effects were not found for participants who merely thought about gay men, suggesting that the effect could not be explained by mere category priming or demand characteristics. Furthermore, imagined contact has been found to be *more effective* for participants with stronger initial prejudices (West et al., 2017), making it an ideal intervention for this context.

Collective action. That said, a more central criticism of contact-based strategies (including imagined contact), is that they focus too strongly on positive intergroup attitudes to the neglect or even detriment of strategies that equalise legal and structural power between groups (Dixon, Tropp, Durrheim, & Tredoux, 2010). In so doing, despite promoting more positive affective responses, intergroup contact may undermine the fight for equal rights and privileges, and vice versa (Becker & Wright, 2011; Becker, Wright, Lubensky, & Zhou, 2013; Dixon, Tropp, Durrheim, & Tredoux, 2010; Saguy, Tausch, Dovidio, & Pratto, 2009).

A reasonable volume of empirical evidence supports this concern. Dixon, Durrheim, and Tredoux (2007) found that intergroup contact between White and Black people in South African was associated with more positive attitudes between them, but also with less support for pro-Black structural changes among Black South Africans. Wright and Lubensky (2008) found that contact improved African Americans' attitudes toward White Americans, but also deceased their support for collective action to achieve racial equality. Saguy, Tausch, Dovidio and Pratto (2009), using a minimal group paradigm in a genuine experimental design, found that positive contact between groups increased the disadvantaged groups' expectations of fair treatment, but did not affect the behaviour of the advantaged groups.

It is thus clear that contact strategies alone are not sufficient to combat sexual prejudice in Jamaica. They should, at the very least, be accompanied by collective action strategies - those in which members of a disadvantaged group work together to increase their

rights or improve their position in society, often at odds with or in opposition to the dominant social groups (Dixon et al., 2010). Recent years have seen a surge in pro-gay activism in Jamaica and in the Jamaican diaspora (Buckley, 2012; Walters, 2013; West & Geering, 2013). Examples include protests to ban anti-gay dancehall artists from performing (Walters, 2013), other protests, including pride events, that raise visibility and awareness of the LGBT community in Jamaica ("Gay protest at Emancipation Park," 2010; Tomlinson, 2015), and formal, legal challenges to the "buggery law", which criminalises consensual anal sex between adults and makes it punishable by up to 10 years in prison with hard labour (Dunkley-Willis, 2013; Reynolds, 2013).

These efforts appear to have met with some success. Some popular dancehall performers have publicly apologized for songs that incited anti-gay violence (Campbell, 2012). Some Jamaican politicians have begun to publicly support equal treatment for sexual minorities (Wynter, 2012). There is also some empirical support for these strategies. West (2017) conducted two large-scale representative surveys of Jamaican participants 3 years apart – just before (N = 945) and during (N = 942) a period of intensified collective action. It was found that public opposition to gay rights decreased over that period (including support for the buggery law), as did desired social distance from gay men and lesbians. These effects could not be accounted for by changes in any other predictors in anti-gay prejudice, suggesting that the collective action was likely an important contributor.

That said, despite collective action's apparent efficacy in reducing support for legal and structural anti-gay discrimination, West (2017) also found an *increase* in anti-gay attitudes and negative behaviours over that same 3 year period. This is not necessarily surprising. As mentioned before, strategies that increase harmony can come at the cost of promoting structural equality and vice versa. The lesson here seems to be that a combination of contact and collective-action based strategies would be more effective than focusing on one of these strategies alone.

Strategies Suggested by the Available Research

Both contact and collective action strategies are, to some extent, 'catch-all' strategies in that they apply to a wide variety of groups in a wide variety of social contexts (Corrigan et al., 2001; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Stewart, Latu, Branscombe, & Denney, 2010). What is missing from the strategies to reduce sexual prejudice in Jamaica to date is a focus on the factors identified as central to that prejudice. Worse yet, it is possible that energy has been expended on *counter-productive* strategies. For example, despite the (previously) apparently minor role of religion in promoting Jamaican sexual prejudice, many unnecessary clashes have occurred between gay rights groups and Jamaican churches (Dunkley-Willis, 2013; Robinson, 2012), possibly spurring a backlash from religious groups and a stronger association between Christian identity and anti-LGBT attitudes in Jamaica (Spaulding, 2014; Welsh, 2013; West, *under review*).

According to the available research, *gender norms* should be a central focus of efforts to reduce sexual prejudice in Jamaica. As mentioned earlier, all relevant empirical research points to gender and gender norms as the most important and reliable predictors of anti-LGBT prejudice in Jamaica, sometimes surpassing the effects of all other predictors combined (West, *under review*, 2016a; West & Cowell, 2015). Indeed, it has been suggested that prejudice against sexual minorities in Jamaica is merely a facet of the broader problem of rigidly and punitively defined gender roles (Hope, 2006; West, 2010, 2016a). As such, it may not even be possible to effect enduring changes in Jamaican sexual prejudice without addressing the underlying gender role norms.

This recommendation must be given with some caution; despite strength and reliability of the evidence linking sexual prejudice to gender identity in Jamaica, all research on that specific relationship has been qualitative or correlational. Given the lack of experimental research it is unclear whether gender norms do in fact *causally affect* sexual prejudice in Jamaica or whether the relationship can be explained by some other means.

Nonetheless, the strength of the relationship between gender and sexual prejudice in Jamaica, compared to all other predictors explored to date, is enough justification for investigating the relationship further with genuinely experimental designs. Not doing so could be interpreted as taking an intellectually lazy route to reducing sexual prejudice in Jamaica, rather than the one most strongly suggested by the empirical evidence. If a causal relationship between gender norms and sexual prejudice exists, and if any gender-based solutions are found, they could be much more effective than the avenues currently being explored.

Nor can it be claimed that gender-based solutions have not been investigated or applied in similarly challenging contexts. Intimate partner violence is a serious, international problem. Between 15% and 71% of women (depending on country of residence) experience physical or sexual violence at the hands of their partner at some point in their lives, and in almost all countries women are at a greater risk of violence from their partners than from other people (Garcia-Moreno, Jansen, Ellsberg, Heise, & Watts, 2006). It is certainly a problem in Ethiopia where prevalence is high, intimate partner violence is encouraged by gender norms, and consequences for the victims are severe (Deyessa et al., 2009). Nonetheless, despite the challenging setting, interventions designed to alter prevailing gender norms have been tested and successfully applied in Ethiopia, showing a reduction in men's willingness to engage in intimate partner violence (Pulerwitz et al., 2015).

Community-based research of this nature comes with many challenges. This is particularly the case when it is conducted in developing countries with fewer resources and less governmental support for such programmes (Paluck, 2007; West, 2017). However, such interventions also have the potential to be the most effective; they are driven by the research findings that are most relevant and applicable to the situation at hand. Given that such work has been done in other challenging contexts (Pulerwitz et al., 2015), it seems both possible and strategic to do similar work in Jamaica.

Current Theoretical Insights and Areas of Future Research

Though relatively little research has investigated Jamaican sexual prejudice to date, it is worth noting the strengths of this body of research. First, social-psychological research has often been accused of an over-use of small samples of undergraduate student participants (Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010; Sears, 1986). However, much of the research in this area has benefited from large, representative samples drawn from the broader population (Boxill et al., 2011, 2012, West, *under review*, 2017; West & Cowell, 2015). As such, the findings of this research can be generalised with more confidence.

Second, much social psychological research has also been accused of a preoccupation with variables that are easy to measure, or those that are of interest to researchers, but not necessarily to the groups involved (Devine et al., 1996; Dixon et al., 2005). This body of research, however, has benefitted from bi-directional communication and cooperation with active gay rights groups in Jamaica, such as J-FLAG. Thus, this research has focused on questions that are of importance to those most likely to be affected by sexual prejudice in Jamaica.

Third, this research has benefited from a number of different methodologies including qualitative investigations (Cowell, 2011; Cowell & Saunders, 2011), correlational designs (West, 2016a; West & Cowell, 2015; West & Hewstone, 2012a, 2012b), before-and-after prospective designs over a number of years (West, 2017) and genuinely experimental designs (West, Husnu, et al., 2015). A complete lack of longitudinal research and a relative paucity of genuinely experimental designs must be acknowledged. Nonetheless, each design used to date offers its own advantages, allowing important relationships to be detected, causal directions to be determined and confounding factors to be disentangled.

From this body of research a number of important things can be known about sexual prejudice in Jamaica. This prejudice is very strong – stronger than sexual prejudice in many other countries in the world including neighbours in the Caribbean. It is also widely accepted

at all levels of Jamaican society. As in other countries it is related to less education and lower levels of income. It is also related to a preference for dancehall music. However, it is *not* reliably related to age, as previous research in other countries would suggest. Furthermore, the relationship between religion and sexual prejudice in Jamaica is unclear and probably changing. This prejudice can be reduced via both contact-based strategies and collective action strategies; the former appears to be more effective at improving attitudes while the latter appears to be more effective at challenging structural discrimination. However, the avenue of investigation most likely to be fruitful involves gender and gender norms. Heterosexual men are more prejudiced than women, gay men are more disliked than lesbians, and prejudice against sexual minorities in Jamaica is related to negative reactions to a number of *heterosexual* sexual behaviours including anal sex and oral sex.

This is far more than was known ten years ago. Nonetheless, a number of important questions about sexual prejudice in Jamaica remain and should be investigated. For example, it is unclear how transgender people fit into the model of sexual prejudice in Jamaica. In many circumstances, even in international media, transgender Jamaicans and homosexual Jamaicans are lumped together and both are labelled "gay" (Adepitan, 2014). An important example is Dwayne Jones, who wore a dress to a party in 2013, and who was murdered when he was discovered to have male, not female genitalia. Many have subsequently referred to Jones as "gay" or a victim of anti-gay prejudice (Martinez, 2013), though Jones' behaviours and apparent gender identification suggest that "transgender" would be the more appropriate label (J-FLAG, 2013).

It is unclear whether Jamaicans typically draw any distinctions between homosexual and transgender individuals. If such distinctions are made, it is also unclear whether one group is perceived more negatively than the other, or how this intersects with other variables like gender (e.g., while gay men are viewed more negatively than lesbians, it is possible that transgender men would be viewed less negatively than transgender women). Research from

other countries has typically found that attitudes toward transgender individuals are similar to those toward sexual minorities, but usually more negative (Tee & Hegarty, 2006; White Hughto, Reisner, & Pachankis, 2015). It is thus worth investigating responses to transgender people specifically; not doing so risks overlooking an important area of even more extreme sexual prejudice.

On a related note, it is also unclear whether bi-sexuality is acknowledged as a sexual orientation in Jamaica. Indeed, this points to more fundamental questions about the Jamaican understanding of sexual orientation itself. These questions are not unique to Jamaica; it has been pointed out that, internationally, sexual orientation is often an unclear, self-contradictory social construct, blending together concepts of natural inclinations, deliberate choices, purity of body and past behaviours (E. Anderson, 2008; Messner, 2004; Rich, 1980). There is also a long-standing public and scientific debate about the stability versus malleability of sexual desires (Bailey et al., 2016). Understanding how these fundamental concepts are understood in Jamaica would be extremely useful for understanding and combatting sexual prejudice, including the extreme negative responses to certain *heterosexual* practices.

Practical Implications for Jamaica and Other Countries

Despite the extremely severe sexual prejudice in Jamaica, this body of research clearly indicates that there are ways to combat it. These findings extend beyond academic research into real-world consequentiality. Despite the largely religious backlash against gay rights in Jamaica (Welsh, 2013), there are tangible signs that the situation is changing. The pride events that took place in 2015 would have been unthinkable in recent history (Spaulding, 2015; Tomlinson, 2015), and the attitudes of Jamaican politicians have shifted from explicit anti-LGBT prejudice (“Homophobic silliness and a failure of leadership,” 2008), towards a greater acceptance of the rights of sexual minorities (Wynter, 2012). Thus, it is reasonable to claim that the strategies currently being explored are somewhat effective.

On the simplest level, the lessons to take from these findings are that contact and

collective action are useful prejudice-reducing strategies, even in countries with severe sexual prejudice. The research reviewed here has thus expanded the generalizability of the research on reducing sexual prejudice, which has largely been conducted in a limited set of Western countries (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Consequently, the specific strategies at work in Jamaica could be exported with some confidence to countries in the Caribbean and elsewhere in the world that have similarly high levels of anti-LGBT prejudice.

Of course, this should be done with an awareness of the legal and cultural specificities of the country in question. There are a number of countries in which the strategies used in Jamaica would be illegal or extremely dangerous. As mentioned before, this includes countries like Russia, Uganda or Zambia, were there are legal prohibitions against "pro-gay propaganda", or "public speech supporting indecent same sex practices" (Elder, 2013; D. Smith, 2013; Walker, 2013). It also includes regions like Chechnya, where gay men are kidnapped and tortured (Vasilyeva & Roslyakov, 2017), and countries like Iran in which sexual minorities may be put to death (Carroll & Itaborahy, 2015). Collective-action and contact-based strategies would be extremely difficult, if not impossible in many of these contexts.

On a more nuanced level, this research highlights the importance of gender and gender norms in shaping and encouraging sexual prejudice in Jamaica. This is not simply a reflection of the international body of research that links gender expression and anti-gay sentiment (e.g., Bosson et al., 2012; Falomir-Pichastor & Mugny, 2009). It points to unique aspects of Jamaican sexual prejudice that do *not* align with those of other, more frequently studied nations, such as the dominance of gender as a predictor of sexual prejudice (West & Cowell, 2015) and the relationship between prejudice against sexual minorities and Jamaica's broader set of restrictive sexual norms (West, 2016a). It would be practical to pursue lines of research that further clarified the relationship between gender and sexual prejudice in Jamaica, and to specifically investigate altering gender norms as a means of reducing sexual prejudice.

On a still more nuanced level, the most important lesson might be to approach sexual prejudice in novel contexts with a greater degree of thoughtfulness: specifically, to be wary of adapting theoretical models from other countries too readily, or of following the trends in the popular media rather than the empirical evidence and academic population based in the country itself. The international media have shown a tendency to both exaggerate and oversimplify Jamaican sexual prejudice (Adepitan, 2014; Mcfadden, 2009; Padgett, 2006), as well as preoccupations with religion and dancehall (Dunkley-Willis, 2013; West, 2014), which are not the most important predictors of the prejudice.

By contrast, Jamaican academics have, for some time, suggested the importance of understanding gender roles and sexual restrictiveness in terms of economic and social hierarchies (Cowell, 2011; Sharpe & Pinto, 2006), nationalism and resistance to colonial powers (Pinnock, 2007), or a method of reclaiming the power and social standing that men are often denied (Hope, 2006). Though less familiar to an international or Western audience, these avenues may become the most profitable for understanding and reducing Jamaican sexual prejudice. It may seem trite or uninteresting to suggest making greater efforts to understand sexual prejudice in a new culture before attempting to reduce it. Nonetheless, as Jamaica shows, it is a lesson that is both important and easily overlooked. Attempts to reduce sexual prejudice in Russia or Iran, for example, might do more harm than good if efforts are not first made to investigate how sexual minorities are understood in art, music, religion, or popular culture. As Lewin (1951, p. 169) observed “There is nothing so practical as a good theory.”

Conclusions

Jamaica is not, as has been suggested, “the most homophobic country on Earth” (Padgett, 2006). A growing body of research has shown that Jamaica is indeed a strongly and openly anti-gay society, with a powerful mixture of social and legal discrimination against LGBT citizens (Farquharson, 2005; West, 2016a; West & Cowell, 2015; West & Hewstone,

2012a, 2012b; Wheatle, 2012). However, there are a number of countries in which one or more aspects of sexual prejudice is even more severe (Carroll & Itaborahy, 2015). Furthermore, this ever-increasing research points to effective ways to tackle sexual prejudice in Jamaica and signs that equality is slowly pressing forward (West, 2016b, 2017). For whatever reason, sexual prejudice in Jamaica has captured a disproportionate amount of international attention. This has led to a unique situation in which the prejudice is very high, but the research on this prejudice is rapidly expanding and fuelling a number of fruitful prejudice-reducing strategies. Hopefully, Jamaica can use this unique position as a platform for new insights into severe sexual prejudice and ways to reduce this prejudice worldwide.

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