

## Communicating Gender in Jamaican HIV Advertisements: A Textual Analysis of Television Campaigns

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*Televised advertisements form a major part of HIV prevention efforts in Jamaica. These texts provide insight into the role of mediated communication in addressing health issues. Gender representations utilized in media campaigns can help or hinder HIV prevention programs. Through textual analysis and from a critical feminist perspective, this study explores the gender representations communicated in Jamaican HIV prevention advertisements. The study found a progression from stereotypical representations of men and women in earlier advertisements to empowering gender representations in more recent advertisements. Implications for research and practice regarding HIV prevention communication campaigns are also discussed.*

*Key words:* HIV, television advertisements, gender, textual analysis

Although Jamaica, the largest English-speaking Caribbean island, has mounted a relatively successful response to HIV, officials from the Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) recently highlighted the need to address structural and social issues that increase the vulnerability of adolescent girls and women (UNAIDS, 2015). Gender inequality is a salient aspect of the social issues that underline the current conditions in Jamaica and the available literature on HIV/AIDS media campaigns highlight the need for more systematic research concerning gender representations in HIV prevention advertisements. Since mass media campaigns form a major part of the Ministry of Health's HIV prevention strategy (National HIV/STI Program [NHP], 2014), it is essential to understand the representations being shared in campaign materials. Use of media campaigns in this manner has implications for audience member's knowledge, awareness and behavior, especially concerning gender and social norms (Wood, 2007). The intent of this study is to contribute to an understanding of gender portrayals in Jamaican HIV television advertisements. In particular, this study addresses the following question: What are the different gender representations present in Jamaican HIV prevention television advertisements?

An essential aspect of addressing gender in health communication programs is a consideration of the gender inequalities and stereotypes within a society. This should be done to ensure that such stereotypes and inequalities are not reproduced through communication campaign materials (Zaman & Underwood, 2003). Despite the shift in media and communication studies which ensures inclusion of more critical qualitative research, much of the research on media health campaigns continues to employ quantitative methodologies to highlight the number of people impacted and the size of those effects (Kim, Park, Yoo, & Shen, 2010). While this is understandable since the health and development organizations must provide reports to justify the use of funds, there have been frequent reminders of the need to undertake more research that is focused on textual analysis of public health media campaigns (Sastry & Dutta, 2011; Khan, 2014). Khan (2014) confirms that textual analysis of public health advertising campaigns, such as the television advertisements used to address HIV in Jamaica, have been placed on the back burner, even by critical cultural communication scholars. This study therefore employs textual analysis to assess the likely interpretation of eleven Jamaican HIV/AIDS television advertisements aired between 1999 and 2012, with particular emphasis on the gender representations therein.

### Literature Review

The literature confirms the importance of gender in the HIV epidemic, with a preponderance of articles speaking to the need to address gender issues in HIV prevention (e.g. Jesmin, Chaudhuri, & Abdullah, 2013; Wyatt et al., 2013). The intersection of gender and HIV as issues that impact each other became increasingly common in research articles beginning around the year 2000 with Geeta Rao Gupta's plenary address at the XIIIth International

AIDS Conference in Durban, South Africa (Gupta, 2000). Subsequently, there was increasing scholarly interest in gender in HIV/AIDS communication campaigns (Gupta, Ogden, & Warner, 2011; Fleming, Lee, & Dworkin, 2014). The most noteworthy findings were the dearth of women being portrayed in PSAs, and problematic portrayals of both men and women that underscored existing gender norms and contribute to health disparities.

The construction and representation of gender in HIV/AIDS discourses have some influence in social and behavior change processes (Chong & Kvasny, 2007). As early as 1996, scholars such as Sacks (1996) and Raheim (1996) began to explore how HIV/AIDS discourse impacts prevention efforts among women but there have been relatively few similar analyses, with most of them focusing on the Western world, such as the United States and Australia (Khan, 2014). A few studies have used textual analytic methods in relation to HIV/AIDS (e.g. Johnny & Mitchell, 2006; Khan, 2014). Indeed, Khan (2014) argues that this lack of attention to such interpretive techniques is not surprising, given the scarcity of articles on textual analysis found in his review of the literature. This was also previously confirmed in an analysis of 22 years of publication in *Health Communication*, the oldest journal publishing research on the field of health communication (Kim et al., 2010). Kim et al. (2010) found that over the period, there was continued dominance of quantitative research in the post-positivist paradigm, to the detriment of research in the interpretive and critical paradigms, such as textual analysis. This review confirms the relative paucity of textual analyses about HIV prevention campaigns, especially those that consider gender and/or sexual representation.

The early textual analyses conducted about AIDS discourses highlighted two main themes in relation to how women were portrayed: women as vectors (or transmitters) and women as victims. Sacks (1996) found that the negative portrayal of women in AIDS discourses helped to stigmatize some women and blamed them for their illness. This dichotomous representation of women as either victims or vectors of the disease was also highlighted by Raheim's (1996) content analysis of newspaper articles in the *New York Times*. Chong and Kvasny (2007) utilized Gupta's (2000) explication of various categories of HIV/AIDS prevention programs addressing gender as a framework for their review of the literature on the social construction of gender and sexuality in HIV/AIDS discourses. Gupta (2000) identifies five approaches ranging from damaging to empowering, namely stereotypical, gender-neutral, gender-sensitive, transformative and empowering. Through the stereotypical construction of gender in HIV/AIDS discourse, Chong & Kvasny (2007) argue that women are portrayed in narrow ways that replicate feminine moral ideals such as purity and faithfulness and repeat stereotypical views about females' roles such as wife, mother and caregiver.

Though there have been continued calls for more research into gender, sexuality, and HIV in the context of low-income countries, they remain few (e.g. Gibbs, 2010; Khan, 2014). The studies that do examine the representation of women and HIV tend to focus on African countries and present arguments that often portray women as passive receptors rather than active subjects who are able to effect change and improve their own lives (Gibbs, 2010). Additionally, when studies do focus on African women the default construction represents African women as those who need to be 'rescued' through interventions from external actors (Chong & Kvasny, 2007; Gibbs, 2010). This led one scholar from South Africa, a country ravaged by HIV/AIDS, to assert that current portrayals of the relationship between HIV and gender either pay no attention to the social context of women's lives, or portray women as passive and unable to act (Gibbs, 2010).

While the majority of research concerning communication, gender and HIV has focused on how men's oppression of women contributes to women's increased vulnerability, there are also efforts to highlight how men are 'oppressed' by their gender, thereby increasing their risk of HIV infection (e.g. Fleming et al., 2014; Mason, 2012). Scholars highlight the importance of challenging stereotypical hegemonic masculinities that support risky sexual behavior (Macia, Maharaj, & Gresh, 2011; Walcott et al., 2015) and automatically select men as primary decision makers in sexual matters (Mane & Aggleton, 2001). As in the case of women's representation in HIV prevention discourses, researchers also highlight the role of mediated communication in the production and reproduction of norms of masculinity (Gauntlett, 2008). Several studies address men's ideas of masculinity in the context of HIV/AIDS (e.g. Fleming et al., 2014; Walcott et al., 2015) but only a few articles that address media representations of masculinity and HIV/AIDS were found (e.g. Gibbs & Jobson, 2011; Newman & Persson, 2009). This highlights the need for more textual analytic research assessing the representations of women and men in HIV communication campaigns, which can shed light on this complex health communication and social change issue.

Media representations of HIV/AIDS undoubtedly influence audience members' understanding of the disease and the use of mass media campaigns has become an integral aspect of HIV/AIDS prevention strategy all over the world. Such prevention strategies seek to directly impact target audiences' assessment of their risk and their response to this disease. Much of the research on gender in HIV prevention has been published about the U.S. with a few studies in low-income countries. In one of the first articles to address gender representations in HIV campaigns, Raheim (1996) asserts that media representations of HIV/AIDS can influence "(a) perceived risk of infection, (b) knowledge of effective preventative measures and perceptions of responsibility for employing them, and (c) attitudes towards infected persons" (p. 402). This was the underlying argument used to highlight the need to examine media messages about HIV/AIDS and their possible impact on women and it remains relevant today as the need for further research into gender representations becomes even more apparent.

Raheim's (1996) critical analysis of a campaign implemented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) concluded that while these messages were important at the time, they might have served to render the concerns of some women insignificant. Myrick (1999) also analyzed PSAs produced by the CDC and found that the representations had disempowering consequences due to their use of certain technical conventions, such as the 'male omniscient narrator'. Use of this type of narrator is especially disempowering for women because it locates knowledge, power and authority in the voice of the speaker whose maleness symbolizes the federal government - a male-dominated institution (Myrick, 1999). Charlesworth's (2003) feminist rhetorical analysis of brochures from several agencies found that the representations shared three harmful identities for women by positioning them as transmitters of HIV, caregivers, and 'flowerpots' or potential mothers (Charlesworth, 2003). Similar results showing women as caregivers or 'flowerpots,' were confirmed in a more recent study (Carson, 2010).

Since PSAs form such a major part of the HIV prevention media landscape, we need better understanding of the messages they provide and their possible impact on HIV prevention efforts. The earliest and only international survey of HIV/AIDS PSAs that provides a descriptive analysis of the actual PSAs was conducted almost two decades ago (Johnson, Flora, & Rimal, 1997). A noteworthy finding from this study is the fact that women were typically portrayed as 'window-dressing,' adopting a passive role in the PSAs (Johnson et al., 1997). Additionally, women were only shown making decisions about condom use in 29% of the ads (Johnson et al., 1997, p. 230). Though this analysis focused on PSAs that were produced from 1987 to 1993, it is likely that campaigns still mirror some socio-cultural norms that limit women's role in HIV prevention.

Similar results have been found in other countries such as Kenya (Mbure, 2007; Mabachi, 2008), Ghana (Faria, 2008) and Brazil (Meyer, Santos, Oliveira, & Wilhelms, 2006). Furthermore, in his analysis of Indian HIV messages, Khan (2014) argued that the way men and women are symbolically represented in televised advertisements targeting men could send an unintended message that men's bodies are 'pure' while women's bodies are 'impure' and the source of HIV infection. These representations may be detrimental to HIV prevention efforts because they do not address the gender inequalities and power relations that define the context in which men and women are being asked to engage in HIV preventative behaviors.

These studies underscore the need for improvements in how men and women are portrayed in HIV PSAs, which is dependent on more research that assesses current gender representations. There is a clear need for more systematic research concerning gender representations in HIV prevention ads, especially in developing country contexts where women and men continue to be impacted in varying degrees by HIV/AIDS. In light of the gaps in the available literature concerning gender and sexual representations in HIV advertisements, we must consider the Jamaican HIV prevention media context, with a view to understanding how these representations may work with or against HIV prevention efforts. *This study therefore sought to address the research question: What are the different gender representations present in Jamaican HIV prevention television advertisements?*

### Theoretical Framework

Societal forces have always been important in molding the mindset of people through various channels. The most significant and ubiquitous of these channels has become mass media, because people experience life through the prism of media (Clarke, McLellan, & Hoffman-Goetz, 2006). Examination of the politics of media representations is a critical aspect of the work of mass communications researchers. The term 'politics' is used here in reference to the distribution of power evident in the different forms of gender and sexual representations that are

present in and absent from media texts. According to Rose (2012) researchers who examine cultural artifacts such as television PSAs are usually “interested in the ways in which social life is constructed through the ideas that people have about it, and the practices that flow from those ideas” (p. 2).

In this study culture is understood from Hall’s (1997) perspective as being about ‘shared meanings’. This understanding of culture is closely bound up with the concept of representation. Since participants in a culture are the ones who attach meaning to things, people and events, Hall (1997) asserts that we attach meaning by how we represent them – “the words we use about them, the stories we tell about them, the images of them we produce, the emotions we associate with them, the ways we classify and conceptualize them, the emotions we attach to them” (p. 3). Whether they take the form of images, sounds or signs, these constructed meanings, or representations, structure the way people behave on a day-to-day basis (Rose, 2012). Furthermore, this process of ‘meaning construction’ is directly impacted by the practice of interpretation, which Hall (1980) conceptualizes as the encoding/decoding model: that is, the processes by which we encode (put things into code) and decode (interpret) things in our culture.

While acknowledging the importance of quantitative media campaign evaluations, this study is based on the belief that media studies research should give greater consideration to how audience members make meaning of media campaign texts. Efforts to critically analyze such media texts provide information about how audience members might interpret public health intervention messages. As cultural agents, media help to disseminate meaning to the participants in that culture (Peirce, 2011). In order to understand the influence of televised health campaigns, research cannot only focus on surveys and other efforts to measure knowledge, attitudes and behavioral intentions. It is just as important to execute critical textual inquiry that can call attention to the norms, values and ideologies that are embedded in such media campaigns (Guttman, 2000; Khan, 2014).

One way to provide this critical inquiry is through a feminist approach. While feminist scholarship is not homogenous, scholars have outlined some general principles regarding critical feminist inquiry that are salient for this research. First, feminist scholarship “conceptualizes gender as a critical component of human life that serves as a lens or filter through which all other perceptions pass” (Charlesworth, 2003, p. 65; Crenshaw, 1996). Second, feminist research about communication is focused on the construction of gender through communication (Charlesworth, 2003). Additionally, Foss (1996) outlined three relevant principles on feminism including beliefs: that women are oppressed by patriarchy; that women and men have divergent experiences; and that women’s perspectives are not usually incorporated into the wider culture. These principles help to inform this examination of gender representation in HIV prevention television advertisements.

In the context of this study, gender and sex are not seen as synonymous. According to Gupta (2000) gender refers to the shared expectations and norms within a society about appropriate female and male behavior, characteristics and roles. It is a socio-cultural construct that differentiates women from men and defines the ways in which women and men interact with one another (Gupta, 2000). Gender is also a culture-specific construct as there are significant differences in the rules governing what men and women can and cannot do in various cultures. However, the difference between men’s and women’s assigned roles, decision-making authority and access to productive resources is fairly consistent across cultures. While the extent of inequality varies in each culture, it almost always persists.

Where HIV and other reproductive health issues are concerned, gender is intimately linked to sexuality, which is considered to be a social construction of a biological drive. Sexuality is more than just sexual behavior; it is a multi-dimensional and dynamic concept. Like gender, it is governed by explicit and implicit rules imposed by society. Failure to follow these rules can result in severe social sanctions, sometimes even leading to death. Like gender, other issues such as age, socio-economic status and ethnicity can influence an individual’s sexuality. Both concepts speak to the central issue of power in our social relations. Power imbalances in gender relations, supported by gender norms in most societies, only serve to exacerbate the HIV pandemic (Gupta, 2000; Ratele, 2011; Smuts, Reijer, & Dooms, 2015). The intersection of gender, sexuality and HIV is of great consequence for women and men. Like many other low-income countries, Jamaica faces many serious challenges, including crippling levels of debt and low or negative levels of economic growth. Many would argue that a focus on issues of gender and sexuality that impact HIV is a frivolous distraction from the ‘real’ issues, such as poverty (Gupta, 2000). However, efforts to address gender and sexual norms in relation to HIV serve not only to help in HIV prevention but can also

have far-reaching impacts that could lead to long-term social change regarding the gender and sexual norms that currently persist.

### **Method**

This study employs textual analysis to assess the likely interpretation of Jamaican HIV/AIDS television advertisements, with a view to understanding the gender representations used in the ads. A careful consideration of the denotative (literal) and connotative (implied) elements of the text was conducted using Frith's (1998) method of ad analysis. In this manner of analyzing the text the intent is its deconstruction, with the ultimate aim of exposing "the social and political power structures in society that combine to produce the text" (Frith, 1998, p. 3). The two main elements of Frith's (1998) method of interpreting advertisements are an analysis of its levels of meaning and an analysis of the social representations portrayed in the advertisement. Analyzing the levels of meaning is done in three stages by reading the surface meaning, the advertiser's intended meaning and, the cultural or ideological meaning in a manner comparable to peeling an onion, as the advertisement is taken apart layer by layer (Frith, 1998). In addition to Frith's (1998) method, this study employs Hall's (1980) concepts of the preferred, negotiated, and oppositional readings and Gupta's (2000) continuum of gender representations in HIV/AIDS program approaches.

The texts analyzed in this study are eleven Jamaican HIV/AIDS television advertisements which were locally produced by the National HIV/STI Program (NHP) in the Ministry of Health. These eleven advertisements were the only ones available on the National HIV/STI Program website and they range in length from a thirty-second advertisement to a two-and-a-half-minute music video. A close textual analysis of these videos was conducted by the researcher in order to gain a better understanding of how audience members might make meaning of these texts. The analysis unfolded in a three-step process. First, a basic reading of the text was done to become familiar with the advertisements and record emerging themes. The basic reading involved watching each video several times and recording general observations, including the strategies and narrative devices being used as well as the different representations of men and women. This was followed by the second step of the process where the advertisements were examined in more detail to ascertain the denotative and connotative meanings, using the following analytic categories adapted from Frith (1998), Hall (1980), Gupta (2000), Johnny & Mitchell (2006), and Khan (2014): surface meaning, intended meaning, cultural/ideological meaning, oppositional reading, narrative/story, social relationships and, gender representation (See Appendix A for the instrument that was used in the analysis). The third and final step entailed a constant comparison of the ideas and strategies employed in each advertisement to understand the relationship within and across all the ads.

Though I am outlining this process in a somewhat linear fashion, the actual process was by no means linear. Instead, this process unfolded in a cyclical pattern which entailed constantly revisiting each text and each step of the process. At the same time, I remained cognizant of my positionality as a researcher. At the heart of it, this research was based on some basic premises that I hold as a researcher. First, the people who made the advertisements are operating under the assumption that media narratives can engender social and behavior change, and in this case, sexual behavior in particular. Given this initial premise, producers of the ads seek to contextualize the information that they provide with regards to relations between men and women. My analysis was therefore focused on the strategies, themes and stereotypes evident in the representations in the text, as they provide clues to the socio-cultural norms and ideologies that are embedded within the ads, whether intentionally, or otherwise. This was informed by my knowledge of the Jamaican culture, my interest in media, communication for development, women and gender studies as well as my experiences of living and working in Jamaica to address HIV and other health issues, all of which influence my positionality. The analysis process therefore entailed a careful consideration of my role in constructing data as well as understanding of the salience of writing, not only as a device in my methodological toolkit but also "as one means by which humans use symbols to inform and influence their audiences" (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011, p. 284-285).

With regard to gender representation, the main issue addressed in this study, Gupta's (2000) continuum provided the basis for categorization. In her plenary address to the XIIIth International AIDS Conference, Gupta (2000) outlined a continuum of approaches in addressing gender, sexuality and HIV/AIDS. These approaches run from damaging/stereotypical to empowering. Chong & Kvasny (2007) applied this continuum in a review of the

literature looking at the social construction of gender and sexuality in HIV/AIDS discourses. In this continuum, Gupta (2000) highlights five categories of social constructions concerning gender, sexuality and HIV: stereotypical, neutral, sensitive, transformational and empowering.

A stereotypical representation of men and women is one where damaging stereotypes are reproduced and reinforced. Examples include the use of a macho male representation to sell condoms or the portrayal of feminine ideals such as purity and feminine roles such as wife and caregiver. The neutral categorization refers to ads that seek to target the general population with messages that are not specifically targeted to men or women, such as ‘be faithful’ or ‘stick to one partner’. According to Gupta (2000), the aim is to do no harm, but such efforts tend to be less effective because they do not take the gender-specific needs of individuals into consideration. A gender-sensitive approach considers the gender-specific constraints and needs of individuals, typically by providing a male and female version of the advertisement. While this is better than the previous two approaches on the continuum, it still does little or nothing to challenge gendered power imbalances. Transformative representations aim to make gender relations more equitable by focusing on the redefinition of gender norms and roles. An example is the use of positive deviance as defined by Singhal & Dura (2009) to identify and reproduce positive gender norms that already exist in a community. The final approach on the continuum seeks to empower men and women by freeing them from harmful gender stereotypes. This is typically done by improving access to information and skills, as well as encourage women’s participation in decision-making. Stereotypical representation is considered the most damaging while an empowering representation is considered most beneficial in HIV/AIDS discourse. Applying this continuum to the advertisements allowed for a categorization of the advertisements in accordance with the way that men and women are represented in the ads.

## Results

This study sought to address the research question: What are the different gender representations present in Jamaican HIV prevention television advertisements? The gender representations found in the advertisements run the gamut from stereotypical to empowering, but there was a clear evolution from more stereotypical gender representations in older advertisements, to more transformative and empowering representations in more recent ads. Each video employs different types of representation, so they are not mutually exclusive. Gupta (2000) argues that in order to effectively tackle gender and sexuality in the context of HIV/AIDS prevention and care, interventions should aim to reduce the possibility of reinforcing damaging sexual and gender stereotypes. Since the underlying gender and sexual norms of a culture are either intentionally or unintentionally embedded within texts such as advertisements, much can be learned from the gender representations in the campaign materials that were analyzed.

### Stereotypical Representations of Men

Producers of advertisements utilize stereotypes as a type of short cut that serves to provide “a very simple, striking, easily-grasped form of representation” (Dyer, 2013, p. 246) which allows audience members to quickly comprehend the meaning of messages being shared via media channels. These seemingly simplistic representations are imbued with complex information and connotations and audience members’ understanding of such representations implies knowledge of the complex social structures within which the stereotypes are created (Dyer, 2013). Producers of the HIV advertisements analyzed in this study utilized some level of stereotypical gender representations in seven of the eleven advertisements.

The advertisements revealed three main themes regarding stereotypical representations of Jamaican men: promiscuity as an essential element of masculine sexuality as evinced by the Jamaican phrase ‘man fi have nuff gyal’ (a man should have many women); men as perpetrators of bad sex in the form of unprotected sex (Jolly, 2007); and men as initiators of sexual activity. These types of representation were evident in seven of the eleven advertisements. The sub-theme of men as initiators of sexual activity was evident in four of the eleven ads, namely *Just use it* (NHP, circa<sup>1</sup> 1999); *Pinch, leave an inch and roll* (NHP, 2008c); *Smart, sexy, wise* (NHP, 2009); and *Big*

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Circa’ is being used here because the National HIV/STI Program website does not provide a publication date for the advertisement. Roshane Reid, a Behavior Change Communication Officer with the National HIV/STI Program, Ministry of Health and Environment, Jamaica confirmed via personal communication that *Just use it* (NHP, 1999) was produced and

*man noh ride widout condom* (NHP, circa 2011). The advertisement entitled *Just use it* (NHP, 1999) provides a good example of the stereotypical representations of men as promiscuous and the perpetrators of bad sex.

This ad features an unidentified man clad in black in front of a black screen. The tone is somber, as initially shown through the set-up of the video, and later underscored by the haunting monologue of the protagonist. There is only one character – a sturdy male figure seated on a chair, his face hidden by shadows. The first few words of his speech, “You see me rude boy” speaks to the intended audience of this text. A ‘rude boy’<sup>1</sup> in Jamaica is akin to a gangster in American culture. Moreover, Jamaican Creole is used throughout the monologue as opposed to most of the other ads wherein English is used, which makes the ad more likely to reach the targeted audience. The figure also used the words ‘rubbers’ and ‘boots’ to refer to condoms, just as a rude boy would. By referring specifically to this group (rude boys) and using the parlance he calls their attention to a message that they might have otherwise ignored.

The intended meaning of the advertisement is not only to promote condom use, but to ensure that the target audience understands the importance of using a condom every time. This is evident when, in concluding the monologue, the former rude boy appeals to fellow rude boys not to take any chances, adding: “You must use your boots [condoms] every time!” Consistent condom use among rude boys is the purpose of the text, which the narrator reinforces by saying: “Just use it, every time”.

These forthright surface and intended meanings are laced with subtler underlying cultural and ideological meanings as expressed in the stereotypical representation of the protagonist as a perpetrator of bad sex (not using a condom all the time) and as promiscuous. After getting the intended audience’s attention the speaker explains that he was just like them: “I was a big heavy man.” While literally appropriate to his height and weight, ‘big man’ denotes an “older boy or man who has some social standing, disposable income, or outward trappings of wealth” (Kempadoo, 2004, p. 49). His assertion of being a ‘big man’ is supported by the status symbols he mentions: “I had lots of clothes and hot cars. I had a woman on every street!” These are some of the things that separate the ‘big men’ from the ‘little boys’.

In his next statement, “I never knew a thing like this could happen to me,” he confronts the belief that rude boys consider themselves immune to HIV. As a rude boy, he then shatters that myth by admitting that “a thing like” that did happen to him. He admits that although he used a condom some times, he was not consistent. This is in keeping with the story of the irresponsible ‘gyallis’ (a man who has many women) which is a common theme in Jamaican music and culture. The story evokes a feeling of sadness for his circumstances, because the images and tone of the video are serious and depressing. The deep masculine voice and haunting tone of the protagonist is a good strategy as it elicits an emotional response that gets the audience involved with the character and increases the likelihood of them attending to the message.

Coupled with the belief that ‘real men’ have multiple sexual partners is the value that is placed on male strength and dominance in relationships with women. Socio-cultural taboos on expressions of tenderness insist that Jamaican men adopt hard masculinities, expressed through symbolic and actual dominance in sexual relations (Chevannes, 1999; Plummer & Simpson, 2007). One of the most common tools used to discourage subordinate forms of masculinity (such as being gentle and faithful) is the threat of being labeled a homosexual (Plummer & Simpson, 2007). Plummer (2011) further asserts that in order to comply with Caribbean norms of manliness young men are “almost require[d to engage in] sexual behavior that is associated with HIV risk” (p. 144). As a result of the social pressures that result from a constant policing of masculinity Jamaican men are encouraged to prove their prowess with women from an early age by having many partners and being dominant in those relationships (Anderson, 2012). A good example of the stereotypical representation of men as the initiators of sexual activity can be seen in *Big man noh ride widout condom* (NHP, 2011), which is shot in the form of a dancehall music video with Konshens, a popular Jamaican musician. The lyrics of the ad encourage the male target audience to: “Put you an inna di air if a yuh call di shots wid yuh sex life. Yuh in charge a dat! (Put your hands in the air if you are in control

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disseminated prior to 2003 and the date for *Big man noh ride widout condom* (NHP, circa 2011) is based on references to the ad in the *Gleaner* (Andrade, 2012).

<sup>1</sup> A ‘rude boy’ can be defined as a Jamaican gangster or a young man who may be un- or under-employed and can be seen on the street. The term ‘rude’ is used because of their non-conformist attitude especially towards authority figures. The term ‘rude boy’ was in popular use until the late 1990s.

of your sex life. You are in charge of that!).” While the underlying message of using a condom is commendable, this assumption that men are in charge of sexual relationships is highlighted throughout the song by a chorus used at the beginning and after each of the two verses and the bridge; the music reinforces this stereotypical representation of men among the target audience.

### **Stereotypical Representations of Women**

Stereotypical gender representations are not limited to men in these advertisements. Seiter (1986) explains that stereotypical representations of women usually highlight their relationships with men and family. Just as men are presented as cultural stereotypes, women are presented in some ads as symbolic representations of femininity by showing them as caregivers and flowerpots (pregnant women), which was apparent in three of the eleven advertisements. The ad entitled *Babymother* (NHP, 2006) provides a good example of the ‘women as flowerpots’ and ‘women as caregivers’ stereotypes.

In the advertisement are two women: one who is already a mother and the other who is pregnant. The intended meaning of this ad is the promotion of HIV testing among expectant mothers in order to prevent mother-to-child transmission. The emphasis on mothers as vessels for their children is consistent with the intended message of the advertisement. Essentially, the creator of the message is telling the audience: If a woman did not see the need to get tested for HIV before getting pregnant, the responsibility of ensuring the health and well-being of her child should be sufficient to push her to get tested. Though this belief is changing, in Jamaican culture, bearing a child is considered an essential element of womanhood (Kempadoo & Taitt, 2006). This ideological value of women as flowerpots is evident in this ad, highlighting the aforementioned themes.

Stereotypical representation of women was also evident in other advertisements such as *Smart, sexy, wise* (NHP, 2009). The second scene of the advertisement shows a woman who is sitting in her bed typing on her computer. The shot shifts to her fingers (with a wedding band) typing on the computer and a picture of her family (a woman, man and girl child). Her partner comes into the bedroom, climbs into bed and kisses her on her cheek. She pushes the computer out of the way, smiles at her partner, reaches to the side of the bed and picks up a condom. The image freezes with her and her partner smiling while the words ‘smart woman’ appear on the bottom left of the screen. This scene is an example of the stereotypical representation of women as caregivers that was evident in at least one other ad. Before she is shown reaching for a condom, the camera zooms in on a picture of the family, including a child, showing that the woman is a mother and caregiver. While the idea of the strong independent Jamaican woman is the basis of the entire ad, that section of the ad focuses on the woman’s role as caregiver, based on a negotiated reading of the ad (Hall, 1980). This might have been done in an effort to highlight the need for different types of women (including women in long term relationships) to protect themselves from HIV. It is a salient and necessary representation considering the “love and trust” paradigm<sup>1</sup> explained by Figueroa (2014). In addition to depicting the woman as being responsible for initiating condom use, this type of representation also highlights the need for a woman to protect herself, not only for her health but also to ensure that she can continue taking care of her family.

### **Gender Neutrality**

Advertisements classified as gender-neutral fit the criterion of targeting a general population rather than any one sex. In addition, this type of representation makes no “distinction between the needs of women or men” (Gupta, 2000, p. 5). Two of the eleven advertisements were classified as neutral as they seemed to target both men and women: *Get it, carry it, use it* (NHP, 2007) and *Take your meds* (NHP, 2012). Since gender-neutral ads seek to address a general audience, they run the risk of ignoring the needs of a specific group. Indeed, Chong & Kvasny (2007) assert that HIV/AIDS discourse that treats gender as neutral is possibly harmful since it ignores the unique risks faced by women, especially bearing in mind that the default assumptions underneath such discourse are often more applicable for men than for women. Though this is not always the result, at the heart of condom promotion

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<sup>1</sup> According to Figueroa (2014) the “love and trust” paradigm is an important element of Caribbean culture with regards to how females conduct relationships. A common female sexual practice is the expectation that if you are in a relationship with a man who is your main partner, there is an understanding that a woman does not have to use a condom with him because she “trusts him” to either be faithful to her or use a condom with any “outside” woman (Figueroa, 2014, p. 162).



efforts is a belief that if people are made aware of the importance of condom use in HIV/AIDS prevention, and condoms are made readily available, people will use them. Unfortunately, in many contexts, including Jamaica, this kind of appeal might be more applicable to one gender than the other, people of one socio-economic status more than another, and depend on the type of relationship. However, the gender-neutral ads mentioned above seem to balance these needs in such a way as to reach men and women, as well as different age groups.

*Take your meds* (NHP, 2012) is an example of how this is done. This advertisement promotes the importance of taking your medication the way the doctor orders, not only for HIV, but all chronic diseases. The underlying message to both men and women is that HIV is just like any other chronic illness. To make this explicit the doctor groups HIV along with other common chronic illnesses like diabetes and high blood pressure in an obvious effort to normalize the disease. The use of a doctor as an authority figure is in keeping with the high cultural capital accorded doctors in Jamaican society, where doctors enjoy a high level of respect. The older age of the stern doctor also makes him more credible. The audience might have dismissed a younger or female physician (though they are growing in numbers).

### Gender Sensitive Approaches

Recognition of the dissimilar needs of individual men and women is central to gender sensitive approaches that address the needs of each gender. The two ads entitled *Be in the know* (NHP, 2008a, 2008b) are good examples of this type of approach; they explicitly target each gender using male and female versions. In the male version of the ad there is one male character who shields his identity by hiding his features in black. He appears against a stark white background. No objects are present. In the female version appear two women whose identities are similarly protected. Both ads urge viewers is to 'be in the know' by getting tested for HIV. Disguising the identities of the performers acknowledges the possible fear of stigma and discrimination that might result from people thinking that they are HIV positive.

In the male version of the ad, no blatant cultural beliefs are highlighted, but in the female version there is a reference to implicitly male promiscuity; one of the female characters asks her friend "are you sure that your partner hasn't cheated on you?" In Jamaican culture where some men do have multiple partners, this is a valid question. Since 'love and trust' are supposed to prevail for women in a committed relationship (Figueroa, 2014), the question reflect sensitivity towards a delicate issue. Women, the ad indicates, have to be responsible for their partners' actions as well as their own. The narrator warns: "if you have doubts about your or your partner's HIV status then be in the know, get tested." By contrast, in the male version of the ad no mention is made of the man's possible sexual partner(s). Instead, the male version foregrounds the statement that an HIV test could be the most important test that men will ever take.

### Transformative Representations

HIV/AIDS discourses of the transformative type aim to change gender roles and relations to ensure more gender-equitable relationships (Gupta, 2000). The main emphasis is a different conceptualization of gender norms at the personal, community and societal levels (Gupta, 2000; Chong & Kvasny, 2007). Transformative approaches to HIV prevention provide positive role models and representations that seek to transform harmful gender and cultural norms. Instead of supporting and glorifying harmful stereotypes, counter-narratives are provided which encourage men and women to consider different conceptualizations of what men and women can do within the context of sexual relationships. Gender-transformative approaches seek to challenge limited definitions of masculinity that encourage sexual risk-taking (Fleming et al., 2014). Instead, men are represented as more empathetic, reasonable and responsible and women are characterized as having agency in sexual relations. There is evidence that HIV prevention efforts of a gender-transformative nature can increase protective sexual behavior and reduce the incidence of HIV, among other benefits (Dworkin, Treves-Kagan, & Lippman, 2013). Four of the advertisements took a transformative approach to gender representation: *Big man noh ride widout condom* (NHP, 2011), *Smart, sexy, wise* (NHP, 2009), and both versions of *Stick to one partner* (NHP, 2010a, 2010b).

The ad entitled *Big man noh ride widout condom* (NHP, 2011), by Jamaican musician Konshens is an example of this type of representation. Done in the form of a dancehall music video, the ad opens with the artist clad in black and wearing black shades sitting in what appears to be the stands of a small stadium. The ad seeks to transform gender roles and norms by giving the 'big man' image used in *Just use it* (NHP, 1999) a new meaning.

Instead of presenting a man who has many women and engages in unprotected sex, the ad offers one who is selective; not a womanizer – though he may like women and engage in sex – but one looking for commitment. According to this advertisement, a *real* ‘big man’ will always use a condom, get tested for HIV and choose his partners carefully. This representation of men is transformative because it offers an alternative model: rather than assuming that the ideal Jamaican male is promiscuous, the ad holds up a figure that understands women and treats them appropriately. For example, the artist advises men that they should “decide when and how a girl climbs your chart.” More to the point, it seeks to make condom use attractive by claiming that condoms are the new ‘swag!’.

Though it is potentially transformative, the use of a dancehall musician to promote safe sex and committed relationships may be critiqued as a poor choice, given the actual behavior of many male dancehall stars. Images of sex, violence, and violent sex – or what Cooper (2005) calls ‘vigorous sex’ - permeate dancehall culture where promiscuity and male sexual dominance are essential elements. Viewers of the ad who are familiar with the dancehall culture that promotes multiple partners may be skeptical of this message coming from a dancehall musician.

### **Empowering Representations**

In order to be classified as empowering, an HIV/AIDS message must aim to empower or free women and men from the effects of harmful gender norms. Empowerment is a crucial concept in the field of international development (Grabe, 2012). Though its main initial focus was on equitable distribution of material resources to the benefit of women who had previously been left out of economic development efforts, the concept is also applicable to improving individual strengths and a sense of personal control (Catania & Chapman, 2010). Only one of the eleven advertisements fits the category of empowering: *Pinch, leave an inch and roll* (NHP, 2008c). In this 45 second ad, a young couple is shown making out on a bed in a dimly lit room. The couple appear to be teenagers, younger than 20. After professing their love for each other and mentioning that they have waited a long time, they continue to make out, but Charlene gently pushes the protagonist back and asks if he has a condom. On Charlene’s insistence, they stop making out and the young man leaves the room in search of a condom. He goes to the living room to get one from his friend Peter who is making out with another woman. Peter, annoyed by the interruption, quickly pulls a condom from his pocket and gives it to the young man. Upon receiving the condom, he scratches his head with a confused expression on his face. He returns to Peter who then gets up off the couch so they can talk ‘privately’. The young man explains to Peter that he does not know how to use a condom. Peter advises him to relax because he (Peter) is an expert; he then shows him how to use a condom by saying that all he needs to do is: “Pinch, leave an inch and roll.” Peter demonstrates while speaking. The young man repeats the words and actions twice before heading back to the bedroom smiling confidently. In the final seconds of the ad the message is reinforced by a graphic representation of the recommended actions.

The assumption here is that young men are unfamiliar with condoms, and the message makes clear how unthreatening they are. Using them is easy. The advertisement might not have been designed with the aim of highlighting the roles of young men and women in condom use, but it does so anyway. An additional, if unintended message, is that young women need to insist on condom use during sexual intercourse, as indicated by the actions of Charlene. Though the ad is more empowering for men, based on a negotiated reading of the text (Hall, 1980), female viewers may also find it empowering as Charlene shows that they can have a more active role in negotiating safe sex and can share in the decision to use protection, which is usually left to men. Another part of the message centers on the role of older men in teaching younger men how to correctly use a condom. Despite the widely held view that men should be more knowledgeable about sex than women, the protagonist admits that he does not know how to use a condom. By asking for help, Charlene’s partner combats the myth of male sexual sophistication. These

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<sup>1</sup> In Jamaican dancehall culture ‘swag’ refers to personal style (which may include but is not limited to being on trend), personality, confidence, and/or any combination of the three that results in a person’s ability to stand out and command attention. It may also make reference to a person’s talent, or ability such as their athletic prowess. The term originated as a part of hip hop culture and was added to the dancehall vocabulary as a descriptor. ‘Swag,’ as it is understood in the dancehall, does not presuppose or depend on status, though possessing swag and the attention it garners may eventually lead to an increase in status for the person (C. Moore, personal communication, February 9, 2015).

elements of the ad combine to provide an empowering message to both men and women, although the main target audience is men.

This ad is somewhat unusual in that it captures very young characters prepared to learn about safer sexual practices. The setting of the PSA also adds to its novelty with Charlene and the protagonist shown on a bed in a dimly lit bedroom. *Pinch, leave an inch and roll* (NHP, 2008c) is one of only three advertisements that show people in a bedroom, the location where condom use is usually discussed and actually takes place. Of the three ads that show a bedroom setting, this is the only one in which the characters engage in kissing and caressing. This use of positive sexual representations in a realistic setting is a commendable and likely effective strategy to reach the target audience. Despite criticism from some members of the public for its explicit nature and alleged attempt to promote sexual relations among young people (Dick, 2009; Campbell, 2009; Reid, 2009), this kind of positive sexual representation not only portrays humans as sexually attractive but also appeals to a young, sexually active population, who might not have otherwise learned how to correctly use a condom.

### Discussion

The aim of this study was to explore the gender representations in Jamaican HIV television advertisements. This research aim evolved from media constructivist and critical feminist theoretical arguments which maintain that media constructions of men and women influence how audience members make sense of the information they receive. Since media form such an important part of our daily lives, and constitute a major strategy in HIV prevention efforts, this study was approached from a critical media studies perspective with particular emphasis on the gender representations and the socio-cultural context in which these representations would be received.

Eleven PSAs were analyzed using Gupta's (2000) continuum of social constructions concerning gender, sexuality and HIV; ranging from stereotypical to empowering. A key finding of this study is that there was a progression from more stereotypical representations of men and women in the older PSAs to transformative and empowering representations in more recent advertisements. Previous research also found this type of transition in HIV PSAs (Chong & Kvasny, 2007). This finding suggests that producers of the advertisements are aware of the need to replace stereotypical representations with portrayals that have the power to engender changes in attitude and behavior. When producers of HIV PSAs utilize stereotypical representations of men (such as promiscuity) and of women (such as the caregiver role), they run the risk of reinforcing behaviors that can undermine HIV prevention efforts. The progression to increasingly transformative and empowering representations in these PSAs therefore bodes well for HIV prevention efforts in Jamaica.

This study is an initial step in understanding and addressing the gender representations in Jamaican HIV television advertisements. Future studies can broaden this understanding by researching different forms of HIV media campaign materials including posters, brochures, radio PSAs, longer television content such as short and long form drama series and entertainment-education programs. Additionally, research should be done with Jamaican media producers to understand how they view gender, socio-cultural norms and how they address them in the PSAs. Those findings could then be compared with what is actually portrayed in the ads that they produce.

Audience research is also needed to understand how the audience decodes televised HIV PSA messages. That type of research would allow for intersectional analysis, which was not possible for this study. Since audience members can either assume the dominant/hegemonic position (accept the preferred reading), the negotiated position or the oppositional position (Hall, 1980), it is essential to conduct research on audience members who consume televised HIV/AIDS messages to fully grasp viewers' comprehension of the current gender representations and socio-cultural norms that inform them. Producers would undoubtedly benefit from a better understanding of audience members' negotiated and oppositional readings of these texts. Information of that nature would allow campaign planners to create messages that take such readings into consideration when preparing television content.

This analysis is not without its limitations. The main limitation is that the sample did not include all advertisements produced by the National HIV/STI Program, only those produced and aired between 1999 and 2012, and available on the program's website. This time frame and sample population excludes PSAs produced prior to 1999 and after 2012, since they were not available. Analysis of all PSAs produced by the National HIV/STI Program would have provided a more complete picture of the gender representations. Another limitation is that this study

did not analyze other televised programs about HIV such as drama series, which would also contribute to our understanding of gender portrayal in HIV/AIDS messages.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the findings of this and previous research (Hope Caribbean, 2012), it is evident that the Jamaican HIV media campaign materials can benefit from incorporating more transformative and empowering gender representations. The ads have undoubtedly increased knowledge of the disease, but there is room for improvement. In 2008, only one third of the population reported knowledge of HIV media messages; by 2012, this had increased to approximately half of the population (Hope Caribbean, 2012). Although media messages have increasingly had a positive impact on behavior, the most recent HIV knowledge, attitude and beliefs (KAB) study found that 50% of the media-using population misinterpreted campaign messages (Hope Caribbean, 2012). An overhaul of television PSAs and supporting media campaign materials should be approached from a perspective that sees media and communication as cultural representations of HIV that have significant influence in shaping perceptions of the disease (Johnson et al., 1997; Khan, 2014).

The current batch of PSAs focuses on increasing knowledge with the intent of fostering changes in attitudes and behavior. This is laudable, but it highlights a focus on the gaps in knowledge while researchers have suggested that campaign planners should instead be asking and answering the question: "How do we want the public to think about HIV?" (Johnson et al., 1997, p. 232). Such an approach would facilitate the creation of PSAs with more positive representations of sexuality that focus on the reasons why people engage in unprotected sex, such as love and trust. For instance, prior research confirms that Jamaican young women who are in cross-generational relationships defer to their older male partners concerning condom use (Darlington, Basta, & Obregon, 2012; Wood, 2007). Additionally, the Jamaican HIV KAB survey (Hope Caribbean, 2012) found that 46.9% of respondents did not use a condom the last ten times they had sex due to 'love or trust of partner'. Advertisements clearly need to address this idea that insistence on condom use is a sign that you do not love or trust your partner. Media campaign planners could therefore try to re-brand safe sex, especially condom use, as a sign of love.

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## Appendix A

*Analytic Categories*

| Video Title:                                | Year of publication:  | Length: |
|---|---|---------|
| General observations                        |   |         |
| Surface meaning                             | Who are the people in this ad? What objects are present?  |         |
| Intended meaning                            | What message is the creator trying to share with the audience?  |         |
| Cultural/Ideological meaning                | What are the cultural beliefs on which this ad is based? What are the ideological values expressed in this ad?  |         |
| Preferred, negotiated, Oppositional reading | What are the possible alternative interpretations of this ad? Dominant/preferred, negotiated and oppositional readings.   |         |
| Narrative/Story                             | Is there a narrative that is associated with the images & sounds in this ad? What story is being depicted? What emotions does the story evoke?  |         |
| Social relationships                        | Who appears to have power/control in the story? How is power expressed? Does anyone have <i>power over</i> another? If a woman is substituted for a man, is the message the same? Would the message change? Does it 'make sense'? |         |
| Gender Representation                       | Are the representations: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Stereotypical</li> <li>2. Neutral</li> <li>3. Sensitive</li> <li>4. Transformative</li> <li>5. Empowering</li> </ol>   |         |

Note: Adapted from Frith (1998), Hall (1980), Gupta (2000), Johnny & Mitchell (2006) and Khan (2014)