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## A Post-Intentional Phenomenological Study of a Queer Identified Youth in Jamaica

By Keitha-Gail Martin-Kerr

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*Keywords:* same-sex, jamaica, women, lived experience, phenomenology.

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APOSTINTENTIONALPHENOMENOLOGICALSTUDYOFAQUEERIDENTIFIEDYOUTHINJAMAICA

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# A Post-Intentional Phenomenological Study of a Queer Identified Youth in Jamaica

Keitha-Gail Martin-Kerr

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Jamaica's youth who choose to move against the grain of heterosexuality have been cast to the outskirts of society. They do not have a voice in public discourse. If they try to use their voices, they run the risk of being shut down or killed because of their sexual orientation or their non-gendered ways of being. Excluding these youths from society is a major problem that needs to be taken up because of the ill effects it leaves on the youths and also on society at large. As a practicing democratic country, all voices should be heard and respected whether society agrees with these opinions and ways of being. When non-heterosexual and non-gender conforming youths are ostracized from society, society stands to lose the intellect and knowledge that can be gained from these lost voices. No one benefits when non-gender-conforming youths are forced into silence and pushed to the fringes of society.

The research shared in this chapter is taken from a larger body of work that I conducted in Jamaica between 2015 and 2016. Not much has changed in Jamaica since that time that has given any rights to youths who identified as non-heterosexual and non-gender conforming. Discrimination and hatred still permeate the culture as it relates to those who transgress from societal norms of choosing to live as male or female and deciding not to be with someone from the opposite sex.

I was born in Jamaica in the 1970s. I did my schooling in Jamaica up to my first degree, which I got in education. Throughout my years of education in Jamaica, I never saw non-gender conforming people represented in the formal curriculum in school nor in the informal curriculum of life that people are engaged in daily. I migrated to the United States in the early 2000s and returned home to Jamaica in the latter part of 2015 and early 2016 to collect data for my research. In 2016, I was 40 years old. Being 40 years old did not give me the right to try to have a conversation with my family or friends about the lived experiences of people who are non-heterosexual. Being educated did not give me that right either. I state this simply to point out that conversations like these are not welcomed in the culture, irrespective of age, gender, or educational status.

Jamaica is known as the land of milk and honey and is simultaneously known as one of the most homophobic countries in the world. With the juxtaposition of beautiful sun-kissed beaches, Jamaica also has a dark side of jungle justice, murder, criminalization, and discrimination of non-heterosexual people. It shows that something or someone is never all good, and on the flip side, something or someone is never all bad. Everything has a balance. Similarly, everyone has a balance. No one is all good or all evil. It would be reasonable to acknowledge that youths who identify as non-heterosexual or non-gender conforming are not bad nor evil. They are people whose sexual orientation is different from the cultural norm and people who do not have a voice in society. They are also people who have been discriminated against and are forced to live on the periphery of society. It is society that makes things like daily living horrific for non-heterosexual youths; it is not that these youths are horrific. Many LGBTQI people are forced to take their place in society not because that is the place they deserve or would choose but because that's where society believes that they belong only because of their sexual orientation.

How can we move toward engaging in tension-filled conversations around issues relating to LGBTQI? How might we open ourselves up to listen to and respect the lived experiences of people whose sexual orientations are different from ours? What might we learn when we hear the stories from non-gender-conforming individuals? Why is there a need to silence and other the

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voices of LGBTQI youths? These are some of the questions that I wrestle with when I think about my country, Jamaica, and the Caribbean as a whole.

As a phenomenologist, I stop to look at the things that people typically would not look at. I am interested in understanding and then describing LGBTQI people's lived experiences. I am also curious about the lives of people; therefore, as a phenomenologist, I ask questions to interrogate and get a glimpse into the way individuals live and operate. Another thing I do as a phenomenologist is to focus on the phenomena. I try to capture glimpses of phenomena as it is being lived out in real life. I am curious to understand what it might be like to live in a homonegative society as a woman that loves women. I will never get to the essence of these phenomena because phenomena are always moving and never stable. My hope is to record flashes and glances of the phenomena as it bubbles up in the data.

In this chapter, I focus on one participant from my research. I choose to zoom in on Tracy, a young woman who loves women. There are a few studies out of Jamaica and the Caribbean that center on homosexuality; however, to this date, only one study that I am aware of focuses solely on women-who-love-women in Jamaica (Martin-Kerr, 2016). My goal is to shine a light on the daily lives of women who love women and share what it is like to live on one of the most beautiful islands in the world, one of the most homophobic places to reside. Hence, my research question is how does societal homonegativity shape the lived experiences of a young woman-who-loves-women in Jamaica? Below, I share a brief literature review from the Caribbean and a few African countries with published empirical peer-reviewed studies that center people in same-sex relationships.

## II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

I included a total of 19 empirical studies in this review of the literature. Publication dates ranged from 1996 to 2015. Eight of the studies were conducted in Jamaica. Four of the studies were from other Caribbean islands, namely: Curacao, Guyana, and Suriname, and two were conducted in Barbados. Three of the studies compared Jamaica with first-world countries. Three studies from the continent of Africa were included in this literature review, namely: South Africa and Namibia, to extend the geographic phenomena of this issue.

The review of the literature included geographic regions where same sex-same relationships are legal and other studies where this relationship is illegal. Same-sex relationships are illegal in Jamaica, Barbados, Guyana, and Namibia. Same-sex relationships are legal in Curacao, Suriname, and South Africa. The only country I reviewed that has anti-discriminatory laws to protect same-sex couples is South Africa. Regardless of the legality or the illegality of same-sex relationships in

these geographic regions, homonegativity is pervasive in all these regions. Meaning policies are not enough to rid society of homonegative behaviors.

Researchers investigate a range of topics related to the societal homonegativity that exists in colonized countries. Six of the studies investigated perceptions and prejudices towards same-sex relationships (Boxill, Martin, Russell, Walker, Meike, & Mitchell, 2011; Boxill, Galbraith, Mitchell, & Russell, 2012; West & Hewstone, 2012a; West & Hewstone, 2012b; Gromer, Campbell, Gormory, & Maynard, 2013; West & Cowell, 2014). Five studies examined gender and sexuality (Peake & Trotz, 1999; Graziano, 2004; Anderson-Levy, 2008; Gunkel, 2009; Kempadoo, 2009). Another five studies examined public discourse and policies towards<sup>1</sup> homosexuals (Currier, 2010; Charles, 2011; Cowell & Saunders, 2011; Cowell, 2011; Jackson, 2015). Two focused on the unheard voices of women who love women in the Caribbean (Clemencia, 1996; Wekker, 2006). One study examined health-related issues (White & Carr, 2005). The 19 studies investigated a range of topics related to societal homonegativity; however, only two focused specifically on women's lives, hence my interest in women who love women. Homonegativity is bred by inherited formal and informal ways of beings; below, I explain these formal and informal ways encultured in our society.

### a) *Formal Ways of Operating*

The formal legacy that has been inherited from colonization was documented in more than half of the 19 studies was the law that criminalizes homosexuals (Peake & Trotz, 1999; Anderson-Levy, 2008; Kempadoo, 2009; Currier, 2010; Charles, 2011; Cowell & Saunders, 2011; West & Hewstone, 2012a; West & Cowell, 2014; Jackson, 2015). The *Offenses Against the Person Act*, the law against homosexuality, was the basis of the introduction of Cowell and Saunders' (2011) paper. These researchers briefly discussed the consequences of this law on the local level and international levels, describing how it negatively affects the Jamaican economy and the livelihood of the Jamaican people. They addressed how the enactment of the law not only punishes individuals who are homosexuals but also had negative implications for the country in the international arena. For example, because of the law, gay cruise ships are prohibited on the island.

Homosexuality is still a criminal act in many countries colonized by Britain. These countries inherited the *Offenses against the Person Act* (1864) Sections 76 and 77, which reads:

<sup>1</sup> In this paper, the word homosexual is used at times to refer to both gays and lesbians.

*Unnatural Offences*

77. Whosoever shall be convicted of the abominable crime of buggery, committed either within mankind or with any animal, shall be liable to be imprisoned and kept to hard labor for a term not exceeding ten years.
78. Whosoever shall attempt to commit the said abominable crime or shall be guilty of any assault with intent to commit the same, or of any indecent assault upon any male person, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor, and being convicted thereof, shall be liable to be imprisoned for a term not exceeding seven years with or without hard labor (Ministry of Justice, Jamaica, 2010).

The law states that homosexuality is an unnatural act. For something to be unnatural, it has to be compared to something else that is deemed natural. If homosexuality is unnatural, the opposite of homosexuality is heterosexuality, which is deemed natural. Not only is homosexuality positioned as unnatural, the use of the word 'abominable crime' places homosexuality as a monstrous, repulsive crime. Even though this law is more than 150 years old, it is still in effect and punishable for up to 10 years in prison in many countries that were colonized by Britain.

To predict prejudice against gays and lesbians, West and Cowell (2014) included four items in their survey that directly relate to the law:

1. Marriage between homosexual individuals is acceptable (reversed)
2. Society should recognize homosexuality as normal (reversed)
3. Homosexual behaviors should be against the law
4. Organizations that promote homosexual rights are unnecessary (West & Cowell, 2014 p. 4).

The language of the survey items reflects the law that was inherited. West and Cowell (2014) challenged the law in the implications section of their research as one of the ways to reduce prejudice against gays and lesbians. They argue that if the law is receded, then there will be less prejudice against gays and lesbians in Jamaica.

Similarly, in their study West and Hewstone (2012a) used the law to theorize sexual prejudice because the law is what people use to criminalize and discriminate against non-heterosexuals on the island. Additionally, Charles (2011) theorized that the law that was inherited has given law enforcement officers the assumed right to brutalize gays and lesbians and to condone the behavior of those who incite violence against gays and lesbians. In his theorizing, Charles alluded that the law makes it challenging for health workers to provide services to homosexuals since homosexuality is against the law.

Some of the countries that were colonized have repealed the *Offenses Against the Person Act*. Even

though homosexuality is decriminalized, some of these countries are still operating under a colonial mentality in formalized ways (Clemencia, 1996; Currier, 2010). For example, homosexuality is legal in Curacao and Suriname; however, there are no anti-discriminatory laws to protect people who are gays and lesbians. Clemencia's study of women-who-love-women in Curacao illustrates this point when an interviewee states, "Only yesterday I learned that one of the earlier mentioned women lost her job at the local industry because the management did not think it appropriate to have a lesbian working in the place" (Clemencia, 1996, p. 84). This example shows that lesbians are discriminated against, even though homosexuality is legal in Curacao. This discrimination against lesbians and gays is an example of the continuing influence of colonial beliefs, as illustrated in the *Offenses Against the Person Act Law*.

Five of the 19 studies documented how government leaders uphold the law in public forums. Charles (2011) refers to the government backing of the law as "state-sponsored-homophobia" (p. 12). This means that the state's leaders use their authority to ensure that the law is enforced in structural ways. An example of this was illustrated in Currier's study in Namibia. During a police graduation ceremony, the Minister of Home Affairs called for police officers to "eliminate" gays and lesbians in Namibia (Currier, 2010, p. 120). In a similar situation, a former Prime Minister of Jamaica publicly stated on international television that he did not want any gays or lesbians as members of his parliament (Cowell, 2011; West & Hewstone 2012a; West & Cowell, 2014). These studies illustrate that government leaders contribute to the institutionalized behaviors inherited from colonization.

#### b) *Informal Ways of Operating*

The studies I reviewed from the literature documented various ways the legacy of colonization is lived out in informal ways. Some of the informal ways of being that have been inherited from the period of colonization have been operationalized through religiosity, music, heteronormative values, and discrimination against gays and lesbians at the intersection of race and class. In the following sections, I discuss how these informal ways of being have been documented in the research.

##### i. *Religiosity*

Most studies cited religiosity as a way of being inherited from colonization and used to discriminate against lesbians and gays (Charles, 2011; Cowell, 2011; Cowell & Saunders, 2011; West & Hewstone, 2012; West & Cowell, 2014). For example, West and Cowell (2014) investigated predictors of prejudice against homosexuals in Jamaica and concluded that most opponents of gays and lesbians pointed to Christianity as their motivation. Participants in their study considered



homosexuality to be a sinful, abominable act. Interestingly, West and Cowell reported that religiosity predicted negative attitudes toward gays and lesbians. However, in some cases, religiosity also predicted less negative behaviors towards gays and lesbians. This may sound paradoxical. It is a situation where Christian leaders urge their followers to “love the sinner and hate the sin” (West & Cowell, 2014, p. 7). The sinner would be the homosexual or the lesbian. The sin would be the act of homosexuality. Christians, in their effort to perpetuate a colonized mentality to convert others to Christianity, profess to love the sinner and hate the sin (West & Cowell, 2014). Similarly, Jackson (2015) stated that converting people to Christianity conjures up colonial imagery and the prominent role of religion in colonization.

#### ii. *Music*

Several studies documented that Jamaica's dancehall music includes homophobic lyrics (Charles, 2011; Cowell, 2011; West & Hewstone, 2012; West & Cowell 2014). Charles (2011) discussed the violence and abuse that are encountered by homosexuals in Jamaica. He analyzed three lyrics from popular dancehall artists: Boom Bye Bye by Buju Banton, Chi Chi Man by TOK, and Log On by Elephant Man. He concluded that the lyrics of these songs imply that gays and lesbians should be annihilated. Similarly, West and Hewstone (2012) referred to Jamaican dancehall music as ‘murder music’ and ‘gay bashing music.’ In their research, Cowell and Saunders (2011) quoted one renowned Jamaican dancehall singer, Shabba Ranks, who insisted that if one goes against the law of God, that person should be crucified. Here Shabba Ranks is insinuating that homosexuals and lesbians deserve to die because they transgress the laws of God. Charles (2011) stated that Jamaican dancehall music targets gays and lesbians as people who should be eliminated from society because of the colonization of the British through their teachings of Christianity. It is important to note that only studies done in Jamaica cited music as a way to perpetuate homonegativity.

#### iii. *Heteronormativity*

From the investigation of heteronormativity in public discourse, Cowell and Saunders (2011) stated that the Caribbean attitude is homonegative in general, and homonegativity is rooted in heteronormativity<sup>2</sup>. They concluded from their research that the public discourse settled a heteronormative value system inherited through colonization. Similarly, Kempadoo (2009), in her study of how sexuality is expressed and practiced in the

Caribbean, found that Caribbean sexuality is rigidly heterosexual and intolerant of sexual differences. She stated, “The dominant, almost unquestioned, links between sexuality and gender are lodged in the norm of heterosexuality as normal” (Kempadoo, 2009, p. 10). Similar to Kempadoo, Charles (2011) stated, “Jamaica is a heteronormative place where heterosexuality exercises hegemonic control over homosexual presence” (Charles, 2011, p. 15). West and Cowell (2014), in their study of the prejudice and predictors of gays and lesbians in Jamaica, asserted that the entrenched heteronormative value they found in Jamaican society is rooted in colonization. These studies suggest that heteronormativity derives from the historic agreement passed down by previous generations.

#### iv. *Discrimination Against Gays and Lesbians at the Intersection of Race and Class*

Several of the studies in the literature reviewed mentioned that the discrimination against gays and lesbians is layered and rooted in the colonial mentality of discrimination against people of darker skin color and lower economic levels. In the study of the representation of homosexuality in Jamaica, Charles (2011) theorized that the complexities of race and class relate to homophobic behaviors in Jamaica. He states, “The negative representation of homosexuality varies based on skin color, gender, social class, and geographic location” (p. 23). This implies that darker-skinned, lower socioeconomic-status homosexuals who live in rural areas experience more discrimination than lighter-skinned homosexuals, middle- and upper-economic-status homosexuals who live in urban areas.

In his study, Jackson (2015) asked a participant if it is more permissible for lighter skin-tone Jamaicans and visitors to the island to be gay or lesbian, and the participant responded,

Ya, it is more permissible for uptown white Jamaicans. It is more permissible for Jamaicans who tend to be light-skinned. Ya, Jamaican people don't do that's not a thing that Jamaican people do, but uptown and light-skinned and tourists they can do that because they are foreign-minded (Jackson, 2015, p. 235).

This participant in Jackson's study illustrates the complex ways in which race and class affect one's view of homosexuality. The participant implies that light-skinned Jamaicans are not ‘real’ Jamaican because real Jamaicans are Black people or people of a dark complexion. Therefore, light-skinned Jamaicans are not real Jamaicans, and they are not discriminated against as much as real Jamaicans are. This participant also mentions that homosexuality is permissible for light-skinned Jamaicans who live uptown. The reference to uptown usually signifies someone from an upper middle class or an upper-class status. These two studies (Charles, 2011 & Jackson 2015) highlight that the

<sup>2</sup> Heteronormativity “refers to the institutionalization of heterosexuality and heterosexual valued in a society imbuing them with high degree of moral rectitude and as corollary rejecting divergent outlooks” (Cowell and Saunders, 2011, p. 317).

discrimination that gays and lesbians face is rooted in the colonized mentality of race and class, where the lighter-skinned and upper-class person faces less discrimination as compared to the darker-skinned and lower economic class person.

The intolerance for homosexuals and gays is a product of historical forces (Charles, 2011). Some of these historical forces manifest in formal ways, such as the *Offenses Against the People Act* law that penalizes homosexuals for a maximum of 10 years, and also the actions and words of government leaders. Apart from these formal ways, the legacy of colonization is still lived out in informal ways through religiosity, music, heteronormative values, and discrimination at the intersection of race and class.

Comparing the studies that took place in Jamaica to the studies that took place in other countries, Jamaica is the only setting where music was reported as upholding the hegemony of heteronormativity. Similar to Jamaica, other countries reported that homonegativity was perpetuated through the *Offenses Against the People Act* law, Christianity, and heteronormativity as the legacy of colonization.

### III. METHODOLOGY

For this research, I used post-intentional phenomenology (Vagle, 2014) to capture glances of how societal homonegativity shapes the lived experiences of a young woman who loves women in Jamaica. I was interested in exploring the tentative manifestations of the phenomena of societal homonegativity on the lived experiences of a woman who loves women.

Since 2010, Vagle has helped others to see phenomenology in new ways. He was trying to see the phenomenon for what it is becoming. Vagle asserted that in post-intentional phenomenology, “intended meanings are always in the process of becoming” (Vagle, 2014, p. 41); therefore, intended meanings are generative. In other words, in post-intentional phenomenology, meanings are “multiple, partial, and fleeting” (Vagle, 2014, p. 41). Simply stated, a phenomenon can have several meanings, and it is never static.

Post-intentional phenomenologists want to understand how things are experienced in multiple ways. In this study, I tried to understand and theorize the various ways things manifest and appear in and through the phenomena that I studied.

For crafting a post-intentional phenomenology study, Vagle (2014) outlined a five-component process: Identify a phenomenon in its multiple, partial, and varied contexts.

1. Devise a clear, yet flexible process for gathering data appropriate for the phenomenon under investigation.

2. Make a post-reflexive plan.
3. Read and write your way through your data in a systematic, responsive manner.
4. Craft a text that captures tentative manifestations of the phenomenon in its multiple, partial, and varied contexts (p. 121).

For the research methodology, I followed these steps - weaving in and out of them in a nonlinear fashion - as I worked my way through data collection, analysis, results, and implication of the phenomenon of how societal homonegativity shapes the lived experiences of Tracy, a young woman who loves women.

1. Identify a Phenomenon in its Multiple, Partial, and Varied Contexts.

The first component consisted of six elements that lay the groundwork for a post-intentional phenomenology study. Vagle outlined the following elements:

- 1.1. State the research problem,
- 2.1. Conduct a partial review of the literature,
- 3.1. Write a philosophical claim that relates to the research problem,
- 4.1. State the research questions,
- 5.1. Situate the phenomena in varied contexts,
- 6.1. Identify research participants (Vagle, 2014, p. 122).
2. Devise a clear yet flexible process for gathering data appropriate for the phenomenon under investigation.

This process required me to select data sources and align data sources with the research question. The data sources that I used were Tracy's written memory, semi-structured interviews, artifacts such as Jamaican Dancehall music, and my post-reflexion journal.

3. Make a post-reflexive plan.

A post-reflexive plan is used as a guide for the researcher to interrogate prior beliefs and assumptions, as well as interpretation of data in an effort to explicate the phenomenon (Vagle, 2014). Post-reflexivity encourages the researcher to think through ways the researcher and the research are always in an intentional relationship with each other (Vagle, 2014). Vagle (2014) suggested the post reflexive writing should contain four levels of post-reflexivity:

- a) Moments when the researcher instinctively connects with what he/she/ze observes and moments in which he/she/ze instinctively disconnects,
- b) My assumptions of normality,
- c) Bottom lines, those beliefs that the researcher refuses to give up, and
- d) Moments in which the researcher is shocked (Vagle, 2014, p. 132).

I identify as a woman who loves women. I live with my partner and our daughter in America. Therefore,

I wrote in my post-reflexive journal at the beginning and throughout the duration of the study. I wrote an initial post-reflexive statement that explained the beliefs, histories, and theories that framed my perspectives as a woman who loves women. I used my post-reflexive journal as a data source. My post-reflexive journal entries allowed me to uncover my bias and prejudices as I moved through the research process. The entries in my post-reflexive journal contained wonderings, assumptions, bottom-line, and moments when I was shocked. These entries were a source of data as they helped to examine how I was framing what I was seeing.

4. Read and write your way through your data in a systematic, responsive manner.

I read and wrote my way through the data in a systematic manner to capture tentative manifestations of the phenomenon of how societal homonegativity shapes the lived experiences of Tracy, a young woman who loves women in Jamaica. I explored this phenomenon in its varied, partial, and fleeting ways. I adhered to this process at the time of data analysis by using two types of systematic analysis to make meaning of the data that I collected. The analyses that I used were collective memory work (Haug, 1987) and thinking with theory (Jackson and Mazzei, 2012).

5. Craft a text that captures tentative manifestations of the phenomenon and its multiple, partial, and varied contexts.

I used traditional and non-traditional types of writing to show how the phenomenon of women who love women in Jamaica is lived out in multiple ways. For non-traditional forms of writing, I used stories, song lyrics, and poems to capture glimpses of the phenomenon. I hope I write in such a manner that allows the readers to get a vivid image of Tracy's, my participant's, intentional relationship with the phenomenon.

#### IV. RESULTS

The data collected showed tentative manifestations of the phenomena - how does societal homonegativity shape the lived experiences of Tracy, a young woman who identifies as a woman who loves women. I asked Tracy to zoom in and write about a moment when she had to hide her love for women.

Below is Tracy's written memory.

*One specific moment when I had to hide my love for women was when I was much younger... just left college and my now ex-boyfriend and I were having problems...he's someone my mom loved a lot and I think it's because he was the reason she thought I was not gay as she later revealed that same day. I came to her and my sister to talk about the issues I was having with my now ex-boyfriend and we all had a good conversation about it and laughed and I made a comment to my mom saying "know you not gonna say nothing bad about him" to which she replied "no don't say*

*that... if he is wrong, he is wrong, but I do love seeing you with that boy because for a long time I thought you were gonna be a lesbian" and my sister joined in and agreed that she too thought I was gonna be a lesbian. For a moment I just stopped and looked at them in complete shock and as I was about to take brave heart and say so what if I am...my mom just gave out "mi nuh want nuh homosexuals or HIV people around mi" and I can't forget how disgusted she looked as she said it... I had to pause then burst out into laughing and try not to look guilty by saying to them that I'm not into those things I'm just a tomboy because I grew up rough with all the boys. At that point I realized that telling my family how I felt about women emotionally and sexually is gonna be a real challenge.*

##### i. Fear

Fear was one phenomenon that tentatively manifested in Tracy's memory. After Tracy's mom and sister told her that they thought she was a lesbian, she wrote, "I was about to take brave heart and say so what if I am..." This showed that Tracy was afraid of telling her mom and her sister that she is a woman who loves women. The phrase "take brave heart" could mean that Tracy was trying to be brave at the moment; however, she could not muster the courage to tell her mom and her sister that she is a woman who loves women.

In Tracy's story, she was not the only one who showed fear; her mom and sister showed signs of fear. Tracy's fear was telling her mom and her sister that she is a woman who loves women. Her mom and her sister feared that Tracy is a woman who loves women. This was evident in the story when Tracy wrote that her mom loved her ex-boyfriend a lot "...because he was the reason she thought I was not gay." Later in the story, Tracy quoted her mom, who stated, "I do love seeing you with that guy; for a long time, I thought you were gonna be a lesbian." At that moment in the story, Tracy's sister joined in the conversation and stated that she, too, thought that Tracy would be a lesbian. In the story, the mom and the sister expressed a sense of fear for Tracy being a lesbian. The mom even went so far as to say, "me nuh wan nuh homosexual and HIV people around mi." In this sentence, the mom showed fear of homosexuals because she associates homosexuality with a disease (HIV). Homosexuality is closely linked with HIV, which is a disease that Tracy's mom feared.

##### ii. Care

Care manifested in Tracy's written memory. In Tracy's written memory, care was evident in the way she interacted with her mom and her sister. Care was noticeable in the story when Tracy went to her mom and her sister to talk about the problems she was having with her ex-boyfriend. Tracy wrote, "I came to her and my sister to talk about the issues I was having with my now ex-boyfriend, and we all had a good conversation about it and laughed..." The interaction between Tracy, her mom, and her sister revealed they cared about each other. Tracy probably knew that her mom and her sister

would care to hear about her problems; therefore, she went to them and discussed her issues with them.

As the story continued, Tracy cared what her mom had to say about her ex-boyfriend. After she explained everything the ex-boyfriend did to her, she cared about the mom's opinion of the ex-boyfriend. Therefore, she asked her mom, "know you not gonna say nothing bad about him?" The mom responded that she cared that Tracy had a boyfriend. And she cared about what people would think of Tracy if Tracy did not have a boyfriend. The mom showed this by stating, "If he (the boyfriend) is wrong, he is wrong, but I do love seeing you with that boy because, for a long time, I thought you were gonna be a lesbian." Tracy's mom showed that she cared that Tracy was involved with someone from the opposite sex. She cared about what people might think about Tracy if she did not have a boyfriend. She cared for Tracy because she did not want Tracy to be thought of as a woman who loves women.

Toward the end of the story, Tracy indicated that she cared for her family. She tried to ease their thoughts that she was a woman who loves women. Tracy thought of telling her mom and sister that she was a woman-who-loves-women. However, when Tracy heard her mom's comments and saw the disgust on her mom's face regarding women-who-love-women, she decided not to tell her mom and her sister the truth. Instead of telling them the truth and hurting their feelings, she wrote, "I burst out laughing and tried not to look guilty by saying to them that I'm not into those things." This line indicated that Tracy cared for her mom and her sister and would rather deny a part of her identity than tell them the truth about her sexual orientation.

### iii. *Hopefulness and Wishful-thinking*

Hopefulness and wishing manifested in Tracy's written memory. In Tracy's written memory, hopefulness was evident several times throughout her story. At the beginning of her story, she wrote about a time when she had a problem with her now ex-boyfriend, and she went to discuss this matter with her mother and her sister. Tracy hoped that her mom and her sister would see that her boyfriend was at fault. After she explained the problems she was having with her now ex-boyfriend, she asked her mom, "now you not going to say anything bad about him?" Tracy's questions could be translated as, "after hearing all that I just explained to you, aren't you going to say something bad about him?" This question that Tracy posed to her mom expressed a form of hopefulness and wishing on Tracy's part. Tracy hoped that her mom would say something bad about her now ex-boyfriend after she explained the issues she had with him.

Tracy's mom's reply to Tracy's question was also hopeful. The mom explained to Tracy that if the boy is wrong, he is. However, she added, "I do love seeing

you with that guy because, for a long time, I thought you were gonna be a lesbian." This response from the mom expressed hopefulness and wishful thinking. She hoped that Tracy would be with the boy because she hoped that Tracy was not a lesbian. Seeing Tracy with the boy made her hopeful.

After Tracy heard her mom's comment, she hoped that she could have said something to her mom and sister at this moment. She stated, "For a moment, I just stopped and looked at them in complete shock, and I was about to take braveheart and say so what if I am..." This sentence showed that Tracy wished she could have said something at this point in the conversation.

However, this was wishful thinking on Tracy's part. She hoped that she could have told her mom that she was a woman that loved women, but she wrote that she was not brave enough to do this.

Toward the end of the story, Tracy's mom expressed her hope that Tracy was not a woman that loves women when she stated, "mi nuh want nuh homosexual or HIV people around mi." These words of the mom showed that she hoped Tracy was not a woman who loves women. She expressed that she does not want any homosexual or HIV people around her. She hoped that Tracy would take her seriously when she expressed her thoughts and her feelings about people who are involved in same-sex relationships.

Tracy explained in her story that she would never forget the disgust on her mom's face when she commented on homosexual and HIV people. Tracy's mom might hope that Tracy would never forget the conversation and her philosophy on same-sex relationships. On the other hand, Tracy might wish to forget the disgust on her mom's face and the conversation. At the end of her story, Tracy stated that her conversation with her mom and sister made her realize that telling her family about how she "felt about women emotionally and sexually is gonna be a real challenge." This showed that Tracy hoped she could have told her family how she felt about women. She wished that it would not have to be a challenge to tell her family how she felt about women.

### iv. *Diseased*

Diseased manifested in Tracy's written memories. Women who love women in Jamaica were perceived as diseased in Tracy's written memory. Tracy's mom expressed her disgust for people who engaged in same-sex relationships. Her mom told her that she does not want to be around anyone who is in such a relationship. Her mom stated, "mi nuh want nuh homosexuals or HIV people around mi." This sentence showed that Tracy's mom equates people in same-sex relationships to people with deadly diseases. Here homosexuals are perceived as people who are diseased.



During the interview with Tracy, she mentioned that when she is in public, she usually gets an awkward stare from people; she went on to say that the stare comes off as a scornful look at times. She stated:

“Ok, being in public spaces with the woman that you love can be awkward at times because if you are out there and people can readily identify you as a lesbian, you normally get the awkward stare, you know...people just start staring at you. Or, you get this scornful look.”

This revealed that women who love women in Jamaica are sometimes treated as if they have a horrible disease where they must be scorned, ostracized, and cordoned off from the general public.

## V. DISCUSSION

The research question I investigated for this paper is - how does societal homonegativity shape the lived experiences of a young woman who loves women in Jamaica? Based on the data collected and through thorough analysis, glimpses of the lived experience of a young woman who loves women were captured through her written memory, semi-structured interviews, and examination of Jamaican artifacts, such as Dancehall lyrics. The answers to the research question can be viewed as tentative manifestations of Tracy's life.

Four salient yet tentative manifestations showed up in the data: fear, care, hopefulness and wishful thinking, and diseased. These are glimpses into Tracy's life that bubbled up throughout the data. Therefore, it can be inferred that Tracy lives with these feelings because of her sexual orientation, and this impacts how she is treated by society. The review of literature corroborates the results of glimpses into Tracy's life; therefore, the findings of this study fit relative to the existing body of knowledge on the topic of how societal homonegativity shapes the lived experiences of one young woman who loves women.

For example, fear came up in Tracy's lived experience and literature. Clemencia (1996) documented employers firing female workers because of their sexual orientation and their non-gender-conforming ways of being. Implying that this female non-gender conforming employees were feared; therefore, they were discriminated against. Fear also came up in Charle's (2011) research when he discussed the reluctance of healthcare workers to look after LGBTQI people due to fear; this suggests that fear and being feared are part of the lived experiences of non-heterosexuals and non-gender-conforming youths. Another example of fear in the literature surfaced when West and Cowell (2014) cited evidence to show that Christians feared homosexuals will be condemned by God because their sexual preference does not align with the Christian religion.

The data showed that care was evident in Tracy's daily life through her communication with her

family. Scholars such as West and Cowell (2014) reported that Christians in their study cared for homosexuals. They care for them as people, and their mantra is “love the sinner and hate the sin” this suggests that there is some level of affection that is portrayed toward people who adopt non-heterosexual ways of being. Tracy's life has glimpses of care from her family toward her; however, there is not much evidence from the literature that exemplifies that society as a whole cares for non-heterosexual and non-gender-conforming people. Perhaps Christians care because that is the Christ-like thing to do - care for others. The lack of society's absence of concern for and affection toward non-heterosexuals and non-gender-conforming people in the literature is probably a connotation to their lived reality.

There was a lot of hopefulness and wishful thinking that was captured in the lived experiences of Tracy. Unfortunately, none of the literature reviewed cited any form of hope for LGBTQI people in Jamaica and the wider Caribbean in countries that still criminalize homosexuals and discriminate against LGBTQI people. However, there is hope because some Caribbean countries, such as Curacao and Suriname, do not have laws that punish non-heterosexuals. Therefore, there is hope that more Caribbean countries will recede the law that criminalizes homosexuals. Even though there are no anti-discriminatory laws against LGBTQI people in Curacao and Suriname, these two countries are moving in the right direction and toward a place of hope. LGBTQI people wish other countries will move to decriminalize homosexuality.

Tracy was viewed as diseased through the eyes of her mother and sister. They mentioned HIV when talking to Tracy about non-heterosexuality. This is a fallacy that permeates the Jamaican culture as it relates to LGBTQI people; they are seen as synonymous with HIV. Charles (2011) and White and Carr (2015) wrote about the discrimination that homosexuals face among healthcare workers because of the fear that they have HIV. They are also discriminated against in the wider society because of the perceived association placed on them as being sick with the illness of non-heterosexuality that can be cured. LGBTQI people are not only viewed as having a disease such as HIV, but at times viewed as having mental illnesses that lead to the disease of non-gender conforming and non-heterosexuality.

Societal homonegativity shapes Tracy's life as she experiences fear, care, hope, and wishful thinking, feeling diseased through her encounter with heterosexual people in her surroundings. These feelings, excepting hope, were supported in the literature reviewed. Knowing that Tracy experienced hope is a positive emotion that might now be added to the body of knowledge relating to the lived experiences of women who love women in Jamaica.

## VI. CONCLUSION

In sum, this chapter captured phenomenological glimpses of how homonegativity shapes the lived experiences of one woman in Jamaica who loves women. Data was collected via Tracy's written memory, semi-structured interviews, Jamaican Dancehall music, and my post-reflexion journal. Findings revealed that one young woman who loves women in Jamaica experiences fear, care, hope, and wishful-thinking, and feeling diseased. Future research needs to be done to capture the experiences of women who love women in Jamaica and the wider Caribbean. This research might use surveys to gather large-scale data and ethnography to understand better the sub-cultural experiences of women who love women. Apart from different research methods, different research questions need to be asked where the findings will help society to lessen their fears and their perception of non-heterosexual and non-gender conforming women as diseased, so we can move towards care and hope for all.

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