

THE POWER OF STORIES: A COMMUNICATIVE INVESTIGATION OF  
DANCEHALL NARRATIVES AND CARIBBEAN CULTURE

by

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## DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my parents, nuclear family members and close friends that reside within the island of Trinidad and Tobago. Because of you all I was able to pursue my education and become more enlightened as a human being and communication scholar. For your financial, moral, physical, and spiritual support I thank you.

I would also like to personally dedicate this thesis to my grandmother Mrs. Rita Mark, who taught me to follow my dreams and strive for success.

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigates the power of stories told within Caribbean dancehall music and culture that present “good reasons” that are adopted by members of that culture. In addition, these “good reasons” were further investigated through participants’ communicative cultural performances at two dancehall related events. I adopted a qualitative interpretive approach to data collection and employed Walter Fisher’s narrative paradigm theory to engage in narrative analysis of collected Caribbean dancehall stories. My findings show that dancehall stories reveal powerful ideological frames that “naturalize” ways of being within Caribbean dancehall culture. Moreover, various relationships between “good reasons” presented in lyrical stories and the adoption of these “good reasons” by participants in their own stories emerged as well. Additionally, a relationship between the “good reasons” presented in participant stories and the communicative cultural performances of these stories also supported Fisher’s test of “good reasons” as useful in looking to narrative probability and narrative fidelity as criteria for analysis. Such an analysis allows for “insiders” of Caribbean dancehall culture to critically assess their cultural realities while enlightening “outsiders” on the power of stories through ideological frames and Fisher’s “good reasons” that is argued to be applicable in understanding the (re)formation process of cultures through stories.

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Academic research abounds on the topic of stories and its affect on listeners. More precisely, scholars have not only focused their attention on stories told in face-to-face encounters but also those told in musical lyrics and cultured traditions. Such scholarship includes various studies on lyrics and culture that focus on popular contemporary western genres such as rap, hip hop, classical, country, rock and pop (e.g., Henry, West & Jackson, 2010; Inglis, 2007; LaBennett, 2009; Perullo, 2005). That being said, there is a great deal of scholarship potential to study communicative effects of stories in musical genres and cultures that fall outside such western-centric contemporary scopes and reveal unique perspectives that may not be explored in existing scholarly inquiries.

Stories presented in dancehall music lyrics particularly (re)produce cultural associations that illustrate communicative and rhetorical elements that impact who we understand to be fans and members of Caribbean dancehall culture. By studying dancehall stories, the formation of realities and cultural “truths” can be revealed in influential ways; what we have come to know and accept as part of the normative value system of Caribbean dancehall culture can be seen in the way we talk, interact, behave and dress. Such observations are directly related to what we believe, how we act, and how we ultimately view the world. Being able to better understand how stories function as a powerful phenomenon in dancehall culture can aid in the process of better

understanding how dancehall stories are so persuasive and how dancehall stories can be seen to influence fans of dancehall music in the way they incorporate these narratives into the ways they make sense of themselves as individuals and culture.

Stories in music and culture reflect larger systems of value. According to Gabriel (2000), “stories help communities to pass their spiritual, moral, and cultural heritage from generation to generation, they are vital for the instruction of young people, they generate behavioral expectations, and they offer models of emulation and avoidance” (p.88). By studying both lyrical stories, stories of self-professed “fans,” and the communicative cultural performances narratives of dancehall music, I aim to extend the existing academic conversation on the communicative impact of lyrical and cultural stories. Specifically, I am most interested in the relationships between avid listeners/members of dancehall music culture and their understandings of larger cultural formations. By engaging in study of Caribbean dancehall music I attempt to provide further insight into a culture that is often treated as “exotic” scholarship (e.g., Connell & Gibson, 2004).

This investigation revealed three central ideological frames employed across three different types of dancehall stories. Participants in this study were Caribbean listeners who are self-identified fans of dancehall music and further consider themselves members of Caribbean dancehall culture. By applying Fisher’s (1987) test of “good reasons” to participant stories, dancehall music lyrical stories and communicative cultural performances narratives of dancehall culture, I seek to critically discuss the meaning making processes that emerged. In particular, the relationship between dancehall lyrical and cultural narratives and listeners’ adoption of the reasons embedded in these narratives in their own stories of personal life experiences and world views. I claim that the “good

reasons” employed in these narratives become manifested and communicatively culturally performed in various ways by fans of dancehall music that more broadly define cultural norms, understandings and values. By participating in and observing specific dancehall events, I was able to further understand the unique collective formation and reformation process of Caribbean dancehall culture through participants’ communicative cultural performances.

The question of why dancehall stories arise. My reasoning behind the connection between Caribbean listeners and dancehall lyrical stories is that for many English speaking Caribbean persons, dancehall is commonly regarded as one of the predominant genres of music (Moskowitz, 2006). Its fan base can be found throughout the Caribbean islands and as a musical genre, it is the dominant form of music constantly played on radio stations, during social gatherings, and found at any given moment on locals’ personal music devices. Stated simply, dancehall is one of the primary musical expressions persons that reside within the Caribbean are exposed to as reflective of “their” culture, society, and perspective. Therefore by studying dancehall stories and their affect on Caribbean participants, an overlooked cultural significance can be revisited in communication scholarship. Music in particular provides a way to study, experience and explain the relationships that emerge as influential in defining and practicing cultural “norms,” much like the following excerpt illustrates:

People produce and consume the music they are capable of producing and consuming; different social groups possess different sorts of knowledge and skill, share different cultural histories, and so make music differently. Musical tastes do correlate with class, cultures and subcultures; musical styles are linked to specific age groups; we can take for granted the connections of ethnicity and sound. (Frith, 2004, p. 120)

In order to connect dancehall cultural narratives to the scholarship that helps us understand stories significantly influential, we must begin by adopting an academic definition of what constitutes a “story” or “narrative.” For this project, I chose to adapt a definition of narratives (used interchangeably with “stories”) given by Trujillo and Dionisopoulos (1987) as “accounts about particular events and/or particular individuals” (p.205). While seemingly simplistic, this definition accounts for stories as a form of memory recollection of events and individuals that follow a linear pattern of thought that remains cohesive and unbroken.

To gather the stories included in this study, I employed a qualitative interpretive approach to data collection and a combined qualitative and rhetorical approach to data analysis. By looking to the narrative paradigm proposed by Fisher (1987), narrative analysis of participants’ stories, dancehall music lyrical stories and my own stories of patrons’ communicative cultural performances was employed to determine the use of “good reasons.” By additionally focusing on the communicative cultural performances of participants at two specific dancehall events, I attempt to include the rich meanings found in stories as they are “performed” collectively as part of a participant-observation experience of Caribbean dancehall culture. By investigating the complexity of these relationships, the power of storytelling in dancehall music and culture can be discussed as a unique context that has yet to be comprehensively explored.

The following sections offer a road map that shall guide my exploration of dancehall stories and their relationship to larger Caribbean listeners’ world views and understandings of dancehall culture. A few important components shall be highlighted and discussed to provide an introductory framework of important concepts to better

understand the relationship between dancehall stories and culture. These sections will address 1) the origin of dancehall and various common themes in dancehall lyrical stories; 2) Fisher's narrative paradigm as a frame of narrative analysis; 3) The concepts of culture and communicative cultural performances; 4) how power relations are connected to ideological frames revealed through language; 5) methodological approaches to gathering and analyzing data in this study; 6) findings presented through three central ideological frames and analyzed according to Fisher's test of "good reasons;" and 7) a discussion of findings including significant implications, limitations and envisioned future directions of this study.

### **Origin and Themes of Dancehall Music**

Ontologically speaking, dancehall is the revolutionized form of reggae. Taken from an historical standpoint, dancehall music originated from the combination of various soul music genres with African Afro-Caribbean rhythms (Davis & Simon, 1977). Reggae, dancehall's previous form, was based on the experience of Jamaican locales and their burning desire to satisfy their emotional and spiritual needs (Chang & Chen, 1998). These various experiences and messages were developed, portrayed, and exhaled to the masses through lyrics and song as a form of expression, most notably in the form of easily relatable stories (Chang & Chen, 1998). In this way, dancehall was and continues to be viewed as a form of emancipation from authoritative powers through music (Davis & Simon, 1977). As Knapp (1992) explains, the evolution of reggae to dancehall was "born out of resistance... a response to the oppression and enslavement of black Africans and the patricians of Africa under white colonial rule" (p.2).

West Kingston, located in the slums of Jamaica, is the birthplace of reggae in the mid-sixties (Davis & Simon, 1977). Soon after, reggae was found on the mainstream airwaves of Jamaica and was picked up through cheap transistors on other nearby islands beginning the connection between other islands of the Caribbean and reggae as a “local” music (Davis & Simon, 1977). From the various Caribbean islands it has travelled around the world and has subsequently become internationally recognized as a legitimate genre of music (Chang & Chen, 1998). From reggae came dancehall as a unique genre that emerged in the 1980s as a new contemporary form developed by the then current generation of artists (Chang & Chen, 1998). Dancehall is distinct because of its resistance to ‘westernization’ and its inspiration for various liberation movements as it often addresses social and racial issues within its lyrics (Chang & Chen, 1998).

While there are many positive values and themes associated with dancehall music, throughout its evolution, themes have also emerged that have negatively associated reactions as they violate mainstream western broader societal standards. For example topics on sex, violence, and drug abuse are common topics in dancehall music. I attempt to shed light on some of these common themes that are typical in dancehall music but have also been identified in academic literature as well. Although it is impossible to identify every specific and relevant dancehall theme, the following themes serve to ground the more common topics portrayed in dancehall music that can potentially impact Caribbean dancehall fans in various ways. Common themes in dancehall lyrics focus on *values, vulgarity, homosexuality and homophobia, African heritage, violence, promotion of marijuana, and fashion* (Bakare-Yusuf, 2006; Barrow & Dalton, 2004; Gaztambide-

Fernandez, 2002; McFarlane, 2009; Olsen & Gould, 2008; Prahlad, 2001; Stanley-Niaah, 2010; Stoddart, 2007).

Dancehall lyrics address social, spiritual, political, moral, relational, cultural and artistic qualities associated with particular *values*. According to Prahlad (2001), dancehall “became a food, a nourishment, a meditation and a heartbeat that helped keep me centered” (p.17). Prahlad explains that dancehall is noted for its joy, its music and its strength and claims that dancehall lyrics tends to be valued in four prevalent ways by its listeners: grammatically (literally), situationally (in a specific instance), socially (in generally understandable ways) and symbolically (personally associated images).

Various mythologies, legends, rituals and beliefs are also reflected in dancehall lyrics (Prahlad, 2001). One of the main influences of dancehall music is the value of Rastafarianism, which is also treated by many as a form of religion (Prahlad, 2001). It brings with it many values such as viewing the Bible as the most sacred text, the need for engaging in a constant fight for justice, equality and freedom and having the confidence to “know” instead of “believe” (Prahlad, 2001, p.7). Self-worth, hope and aspirations also appear as dominant themes in dancehall lyrics (Stoddart, 2007). Such themes encourage listeners to continue to strive towards success in its many forms (Stoddart, 2007). Since the majority of Caribbean dancehall enthusiasts can be generally identified as from the lower class regions of the Caribbean diaspora, these messages of self-worth, hope, and aspiration embedded within dancehall lyrics often serve as a “class-less” form of motivation (Stoddart, 2007). Love, friendship, unity and peace are additional themes that also appear in dancehall lyrics, most of which are globally recognizable and stemmed from the work of reggae artist Bob Marley (Stoddart, 2007).

Dancehall is simultaneously noted for its sometimes “slack” [*vulgar*] sexual content that overzealously promotes heterosexual norms (Olsen & Gould, 2008; Stoddart, 2007). Such values can be seen to psychologically affect listeners by impacting understanding and performances of gender roles that associate moral degeneracy with women, and promote disregarding many of the standards of law and order that exist in civil society (Olsen & Gould, 2008). Such overt references to vulgarity and sexuality in dancehall lyrics continue to encourage men to be sexually active with multiple women and father many children as a sign of status and prestige (Olsen & Gould, 2008). Women, in the same lyrical content are often slandered and degraded for acting in a similar manner (Bakare-Yusuf, 2006). Misogyny is readily present in various cases as women are primarily praised for their ability to be faithful to one man, to raise children, and to maintain their sexual prowess with their male counterpart (Bakare-Yusuf, 2006). Some dancehall lyrics portray men as clearly dominant (Bakare-Yusuf, 2006), and generally, women are often transformed and reduced to sex objects.

Dancehall also clearly denounces *homosexuality* and promotes *homophobia* (Stanley-Niaah, 2010; Stolzoff, 2000). Moreover, identification with homosexuality may even produce serious, sometimes deadly consequences (Stanley-Niaah, 2010). Men are expected and encouraged to be dominant and masculine lovers of women while women are expected to be submissive and feminine lovers of men (Bakare-Yusuf, 2006). Dancehall lyrics tend to reinforce these traditional social and behavioral norms and expect dancehall enthusiasts to agree with such understandings and display of cultural norms while simultaneously actively rejecting practices not aligning with such norms such as abortion, homosexuality and serving as an informant to authority (Stanley-Niaah,

2010). Dancehall lyrics commonly encourage visual agreement with lyrically created norms by asking listeners to collectively display verbal gestures or specific hand signals of allegiance (Stanley-Niaah, 2010; Stolzoff, 2000). An example taken from Stolzoff's (2000) research on dancehall culture illustrates such practice when he tells of a disc jockey at a dancehall event who asks patrons to collectively denounce homosexuality and allies of formal authority: "All who hate batty men [gays], or informers [the enemies of the ghetto solidarity]... wave your rag or waive your hand" (p.208). In this way it is noticed the prominent understanding of homophobia in dancehall music.

Another thematic element of dancehall's lyrical content is the promotion of *African heritage*, black pride and power (Barrow & Dalton, 2004). This musical genre and art form tends to identify Ethiopia as the motherland and the origin of mankind (Barrow & Dalton, 2004). In this way, dancehall music can be said to reflect the rationalization that through song all human beings are African in essence (Barrow & Dalton, 2004). Dancehall also reinforces the idea that Africans are the primary race, and that all other races have since branched out from Africans (Barrow & Dalton, 2004). The power of African ethnicity is a central focus, and developed in Jamaica as a form of musical expression and liberation from slavery and oppression, the genre exemplifies the might of African slaves to be emancipated in its lyrical content. In turn dancehall lyrics call on persons of African descent to rise above any negative circumstance that they may be currently facing.

Although dancehall music can be used for the promotion of these various values, its lyrics also promote *violence* and support facilitating violent acts that are often referred to as "gun tunes" (Boyne, 2002; Stolzoff, 2000). Dancehall has been criticized for its

crudeness, inanity and negative influence on Caribbean listeners, particularly its popular youth fan base (Boyne, 2002). The promotion of gangster acts, lifestyles, and attitudes are also often portrayed and praised in dancehall lyrics. The increase of violent, illegal and immoral acts in dancehall lyrical content has caused controversy within Caribbean culture and has forced many listeners to choose sides among the various divides (Boyne, 2002).

Alongside the promotion of violence, dancehall also often promotes the use of illegal drugs, particularly *marijuana* (Gaztambide-Fernandez, 2002). The promotion of marijuana is evident in many dancehall songs, often blatantly as the following lyrical example illustrates: “Squaddie [police] me nah [I will not] stop bun [smoke] my ganja [marijuana], so come put on di [the] handcuffs them, member me must make bail, carry me go jail, ah in their the high grade [marijuana] sells” (Palmer, 2009). What is being communicated to listeners by the dancehall artist’s acclamation is that he would rather go to jail when confronted by a police officer than to stop smoking marijuana. It is clear that dancehall lyric like this one advocate resisting laws and authority on the topic of illegal drugs.

Dancehall lyrics have additionally been responsible for various *fashion* statements throughout the years. One of these predominant fashions is that of the dreadlocks hairstyle that has been made popular in the philosophy of Rastafarianism and the ‘rasta’ movement (McFarlane, 2009). Also, various dancehall artists’ styles and lyrics today promote tightly fitted revealing wear for females and outfits particularly in the colors of red, gold, and green (McFarlane, 2009). There tends to be a mixture of high and low end fashion that creates a unique interwoven style unique to dancehall music (McFarlane,

2009). The fashion of dancehall, like most understandings of “fashion” is associated with the era of dancehall music it appears alongside. What this means is that dancehall fashion is always in a state of transformation dependent on current artists and current times.

Dancehall lyrics reflect a combination of the taste, lifestyle and identity through fashion (Bakare-Yusuf, 2006). In the present era of dancehall fashion, a flashy outfit is normally endorsed something that allows the wearer to stand out in a crowd and bring viewer attention to the individual (McFarlane, 2009). Dancehall lyrics endorse fashion as a form of pageantry, a way of expressing oneself, a way of showing off and being “seen” (Bakare-Yusuf, 2006).

Such themes in dancehall music lyrics are primarily understood through the form of story as imbued with the ability to impact both fans and collective dancehall culture in various ways. I seek to better understand how these stories are understood and adopted into listeners’ world views, perception of reality and reflections of this particular Caribbean sub culture. How these stories become embodied in the language and actions of dancehall fans requires a theoretical lens that can aid in investigating and assessing such a process. For this reason, I look to Fisher’s theory of the narrative paradigm as a foundation for articulating both the significance and influence of stories in everyday life and the connection between stories and culture. The adoptive relationship between dancehall narratives as expressed in the genres’ lyrics and dancehall fans’ perceptions of themselves and their culture can be revealed through comparison of such lyrics and the stories told about the influence of dancehall music by self-professed “fans.” A further explanation of the narrative paradigm can provide a broad context for understanding how the identification and analysis of stories is a useful and consequential endeavor.

### Narrative Paradigm Theory

Daws (2007) asserts that narrative analysis is a useful way to analyze and discuss stories. Fisher's (1985a) narrative paradigm theory treats stories as helping us make sense of the world through stories as holding inherent value for their listeners (Fisher, 1987). Value in this sense is described by Fisher (1985a) as that which "makes a pragmatic difference in one's life and in one's community" (p.111). According to Burghardt (2005), "Stories provide the structure of our experience as humans and influence us to live together in communities that share common explanations and understanding" (p. 239). The narrative paradigm, assumes that all humans possess the ability to understand and make sense of stories, what Fisher (1985b) refers to as *homo narrans*. This concept claims that humans are innately both story tellers and interpreters of stories. In addition, the narrative paradigm explains that decision making processes, arguments, and understandings can be- and are often- in the form of stories. *Good reasons* then can be identified within these stories as a way to distinguish "good" stories from "bad" ones (Fisher, 1985b). *Good reasons* are explained as "those elements that provide warrants for accepting or adhering to the advice fostered by any form of communication that can be considered rhetorical" (Fisher, 1987, p.107). Expanded further, *good reasons* are contextual, relative and dependent on the individual, the situation, historical context and cultural relevance (Fisher, 1987).

There are several other assumptions that are embedded within this theoretical frame. The first of these assumes that the world is composed of existing stories and we, as *homo narrans*, choose the stories that serve to construct our own lives (Fisher, 1985b). In relation to dancehall music, Fisher's narrative paradigm stipulates that fans actively

and rationally choose lyrics that appear as stories to organize how they seek to make sense of the world. Secondly, the narrative paradigm stipulates that the concepts of *narrative fidelity* and *narrative probability* (which are acquired culturally through experience) should be used to determine whether a story employs *good reasons* in its attempt to argue how the world is, or should be. Narrative probability deals with how coherent a story is and how internally consistent that story is perceived to be. This is determined in three ways of coherency; these include *argumentative coherence*, *material coherence* and *characterological coherence*. Argumentative coherence refers to the flow of the story, material coherence refers to the relationship a story has to other similarly existing stories, while characterological coherence speaks on the credibility of characters in a story (Fisher, 1989). Narrative fidelity on the other hand deals with how we identify and relate to the story heard, and how well the story fits into our current understanding of a situation (the external world) (Fisher, 1989). This framework, referred to as the “test” of good reasons provides a way to determine if a story holds together and makes sense in relation to an individual’s own perception of reality by focusing on how a story aligns with his/her own beliefs and experiences, and how it portrays the world we live in together (Fisher, 1989).

The narrative paradigm also assumes the presence of multiple domains and that *good reasons* are always understood within hermeneutically as they can be interpreted in various ways by various people (Anderson, 1996; Fisher 1985a). By hermeneutic, Fisher (1985a) means that humans take into consideration all that has helped them make sense of the world from past experience through present understandings. Ontologically and epistemologically speaking within the narrative paradigm, knowledge is not meaningful

in universal ways but is situationally and contextually specific (Anderson, 1996). The narrative paradigm assumes that humans are acting agents that consciously accept or reject narrative arguments (Anderson, 1996; Fisher 1985b). By embracing this theory as a frame for analyzing dancehall lyrical stories, it is possible to understand the various ways Caribbean dancehall music fans rationalize, obtain and employ what they conceive as *good reasons* in their own stories in relation to dancehall lyrical stories. In this way, the interplay between lyrical stories and fans' accounts of these lyrical stories can be better understood.

In addition to employing Fisher's (1985a) test of good reasons as a way to assess and understand dancehall lyric and participant stories, I also seek to assess *good reasons* as they appear in my own stories of dancehall performances observed in dancehall culture. Such an exploration first calls for a better understanding of what is meant by the term "culture" in this investigation.

### **Culture**

There are multiple ontological assumptions and existing definitions for what is meant by the term culture. Definitions range from perspectives that view culture as being objective, materialistic and static, to fluid, fragmented, postmodern and always changing (Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1982). Culture in this study is treated on the postmodern side of the spectrum with an inclusion of material formations. Culture, thus, requires the continuous sharing of meanings, norms and values through language and actions that are socially constructed by dancehall fans and dancehall artists alike. As a result, culture also includes the various material artifacts and manifestations that play a distinct role in how these shared meanings are constructed (Burr, 1995; Martin, 2002).

Sergiovanni and Corbally (1984) explain how culture is related to our understandings of meaning in the world:

A standard definition of culture would include the system of values, symbols, and shared meanings of a group including the embodiment of these values, symbols and meanings into material objects and ritualized practices... The 'stuff' of culture includes customs and traditions, historical accounts be they mythical or actual, tacit understandings, habits, norms and expectations, common meanings associated with fixed objects and established rites, shared assumptions, and intersubjective meanings. (Sergiovanni & Corbally, 1984, p.8)

This definition of culture incorporates and acknowledges both the cognitive practices of the collective in their ability to socially construct shared meanings through language, actions as well as the material objects. This social construction contributes to the formation of what is observed and could be identified as culture, In this case, the identification of Caribbean dancehall culture.

Communication plays a significant role in the (re)construction of cultures. As members of a culture interact through shared language, stories, actions, and performances, they both reflect an existing understanding of culture while simultaneously creating new meanings as they interact (Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1982). It is in this way that culture is reflected as well as created through communication (Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1982). It is only through the interactions of dancehall fans, artists and other members of dancehall culture that allows outsiders to see the display of dancehall culture as unique and dancehall culture as constantly engaged in a process of becoming.

Carrying multiple definitions and meanings at any given moment, culture has been described in various ways in academic scholarship. Specifically, scholars have identified culture as a form of text that can be read, a semiotic system that can be deciphered and as a representation of signs and symbols (e.g., Brown & McMillan, 1991;

Hall, 1997; Sahlins, 1976). Culture has also been described as the *communicative cultural performances* of its members (Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1983). This idea of culture posits that it is performed either theatrically or in authentic completion in ways that resonate fully with its members. In other words, performances of dancehall ideals are seen to be revealed through stories- both told and embodied. For this reason, I have chosen to focus on a third type of story- *communicative cultural performances*- as necessary to understand Caribbean dancehall culture.

### Communicative Cultural Performances Characteristics

Interaction and dialogue are intrinsic parts of the culture equation (Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1983). There can be no shared meanings and little shared understanding in the absence of two-way communication. For performances of culture to emerge, participation, dialogue, and collaboration by members of a group must appear in various ways (Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1983). Understanding culture from this perspective means that it does not and cannot exist solely within an individual if it is to emerge as a collective societal context. Therefore the interplay between dancehall fans, between dancehall fans and dancehall artists, and between dancehall fans and the larger context in which dancehall stories are told and interpreted are important to exploring the construction and performances of dancehall culture.

In addition, cultural performances are seen to be context specific and having an episodic nature (Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1983). It can be assumed that performances by dancehall fans take place at specific times, places and locations that are unique and never exactly the same. Thus context situates specific episodes that allow for

shared meanings to be constructed by a particular culture's members and understood in specifically relevant ways (Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1983).

Further, each culture is unique (Clark, 1972). This means that cultural members possess pride, satisfaction and confidence in their particular interactions because they see them as unique (Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1983). According to Stolzoff (2000), on his statement related to dancehall cultural elements, "what is fashionable today can be out of fashion in a matter of weeks, [so] we need to remain conscious of the ongoing nature of cultural making. It is not a fixed, one-time process" (p.18). Most cultural communities pride themselves on whom they claim to be and what they value in the world. (Clark, 1972). Cultural studies in specific contexts are seen as useful in the way they produce new knowledge because of the uniqueness of each culture. This means in regards to this dancehall culture study that it may bring forth unique ways of understandings.

Another element of culture and communicative cultural performance is that it can be improvisational in nature (Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1983). Although there are various rites, rituals and expectations that are deciphered from the interaction and interplay of members within a specific context, generally speaking this cultural phenomenon happens spontaneously, or what is termed as in "loosely scripted" form (Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1983). The socially constructed nature of cultural performances leads to understandings that are necessarily embedded in members' interactions (Burr, 1995). By studying dancehall culture's impromptu performances and improvisations, the continuous process of it's (re)creation can be understood more comprehensively.

Now that a selective foundation of the characteristics of communicative cultural performances has been laid out, the following sections seek to explain various communicative cultural performance manifestations that can aid in understanding dancehall culture in unique ways specifically through its *rituals, jargons, humor* and *material artifacts*. Each of these manifestations can be investigated and identified in particular dancehall cultural performances and explained in narrative form. By investigating the communicative cultural performances of patrons at dancehall events I further seek to study such performances as embodied stories, subject to Fisher's test of "good reasons."

#### Communicative Cultural Performances Manifestations

Culture can be found in the various levels of *ritual* that members of a specific culture perform on a daily basis (Deal & Kennedy, 1982). These rituals occur and allow for common interpretations by all members of a culture (Deal & Kennedy, 1982). It is a form of function that allows members to think and behave similarly in terms of expectation, attitude and cultural development (Deal & Kennedy, 1982). Rituals in recent time have also been related to dramas (Martin, 2002). Like a drama, a ritual is comprised of activities that are carefully planned and expected to be perfected by members in a social and shared environment (Martin, 2002).

In dancehall culture, there are various rituals that appear at dancehall events. The following excerpts illustrate the practice of two common dancehall rituals:

For the next hour or so, hardly anybody will pay to enter the dance. Rather, outside the walls of the dancehall is the place to be, as it is filled with interesting sights and tempting smells. The atmosphere has a tense unpredictable quality. This is a primary profiling [the practice of showing off through conspicuous display] space... dancegoers in their latest dancehall threads start to congregate in

the street, leaning up against their own cars and motorcycles or those of their friends. People also stand around the gaming tables, while street boys dart in and out of traffic helping people in arriving vehicles find parking space. (Stolzoff, 2000, p.200)

While people barely sway in the early part of the dance, once the juggling [skilled mixing of dancehall music] begins, the dance floor comes alive. Typically, groups of men and women do not occupy the same space or dance with each other unless they came as a couple. Rather, women tend to dance with their friends in groups, and men dance by themselves or with a few of their buddies. Song tends to reinforce the division of space by gender. Men generally are seen as creative, sexual, and violent agents and women as sexual objects whose sexuality is both desired and feared, pitting women against each other as rivals for male attention. (Stolzoff, 2000, p.204)

These two examples illustrate how the understanding of practices that are observable among members of dancehall culture can be helpful in understanding a specific dancehall event more comprehensively. Such illustrations also display how social and political elements of dancehall culture are associated with participating in the rituals in specific ways and in specific sequence.

Additionally, *jargon*, as a communicative cultural performance manifestations appear through language that is understood largely to the members of a particular culture but may appear as foreign to those outside it (Martin, 2002). In Caribbean dancehall culture there are various terms that are commonly understood by members of that culture, while remaining obtuse for those without “insider” understandings. Dancehall artists, DJs and fans continuously invent new words and expressions that have particular understandings within dancehall culture (Stolzoff, 2000). Jargon is such a major part of dancehall music culture that there have been various publications of “dancehall dictionaries” that have emerged, one would assume for the “outsider” (Stolzoff, 2000).

There are two main forms of jargon that such manifestations reflect: technical and emotional jargons (Martin, 2002). Technical jargon reflects terms that act functionally to

describe or identify specific roles within a culture (Martin, 2002). One example of technical jargon in Caribbean dancehall culture would be the term “bubble” or “bubbling,” referring to a form of erotic dance, typically performed by women, in which tight pelvic circular movements are executed in timing with the rhythm of the music being played (Stolzoff, 2000). This meets the definition of technical jargon because it describes the dancing position of women at dancehall party events.

Emotional jargon connotes specific feeling often through the use of metaphor. These can appear in different forms including nicknames, places and positions (Martin, 2002). For example, in dancehall culture, the term “rude boys” is often used to describe rebellious urban young men that can typically be identified within dancehall culture by their thug like appearance and aggressive demeanor (Stolzoff, 2000). This meets the concept of emotional jargon because it utilizes a metaphor that emotionally describes a type of youth that are viewed as troublesome. Although jargon may appear somewhat trivial in these examples, it can be utilized to explore and aid in distinguishing the embedded values and meanings that a cultures members’ reveal in everyday talk. Jargon in this regard is more than just a word or phrase, but a product of the culture that uses it and simultaneously capable of socially constituting cultural norms in its collective use and shared meanings.

*Humor*, as a communicative cultural performance manifestation is typically not understood or viewed as being “humorous” to persons outside the particular culture within which such humor appears (Martin, 2002). Humor displays shared meanings between members as well as a particular bond created through understanding actions and language as “funny” (Martin, 2002). Various forms of gender, sexism, racism and

varying “othering” connotations may be embedded in humor that constitutes what is understood within a specific culture (Martin, 2002). These connotations are often viewed negatively when interpreted out of context of particular cultural experience. Humor can also eradicate uncomfortable situations that may arise between uncomfortable situations. In this way, humor is a constructive tool that may reduce tensions and navigate through complicated situations (Martin, 2002).

Finally, the communicative cultural performance manifestation of *material makeup* includes elements of architecture, decor, dress, ornaments, equipment and documents that have a strong influence on and display of a specific culture (Barley, 1983). These are typically considered powerful manifestations of culture because of their ease of visibility and recognition by both “insiders” and “outsiders” (Barley, 1983). The following excerpt illustrates how material manifestations can be displayed by men and women of a specific era in dancehall culture:

The body was now a site of increasing degrees of adornment. The “donnettes” [female crew leaders] demonstrated their physical and financial “ass-ets” by wearing clothes labeled “batty-riders” which Chester Francis-Jackson [dancehall dictionary] defines as “a skirt or a pair of shorts which expose more of the buttocks than it conceals” (1995). “Puny printers” [pants that showed the outlines of a woman’s genitalia], wigs of all colors, mesh tops, large jewelry (gold bangles, rings, earrings, nose rings), and elaborate hairdos all became part of the new fashion ensemble. Men’s dancehall fashions changed as well, shifting from the hippie and African dancehall inspired garb of the roots era to flashy suits, abundant jewelry, and hairdos made popular by American rappers. Unlike the women, however, male dancehall fans and performers continued to cover their bodies in long draping outfits that hid rather than revealed their shape. (Stolzoff, 2000, p.110)

The material culture of dancehall performed at this particular event is visibly evident in the lewdness, vulgarity, sexuality, status and supposed wealth apparent in the “fashionable” suits worn by men and “skimpy” garments worn by women. Thus, in this

way it may be conceivable to infer that prestige, status, self-confidence and respect for men alongside sexuality, slackness and vulgarity for women are some of the values performed in dancehall culture by patrons at this particular Caribbean dancehall event. By viewing and interpreting such material manifestations in culture, embedded values can be further revealed and discussed.

Specific dancehall cultural understandings necessitate further exploration of power relations emergent in these dancehall stories as well. Because power relations are embedded in all communication, the following section seeks to address and define how exactly such relations affect an investigation of dancehall stories and their ability to reveal unique insights into Caribbean dancehall culture.

### **Power Relations in Communication**

When attempting to understand power from a communicative point of view, it is imperative to visualize the concept of power as a relational construct and not as a thing that one possesses. Communication in itself is relational in nature as evidenced in the social use of language between persons who co-construct meanings. In this way, power relations are understood to be socially constructed through the use of language: “Power is not fundamentally a property of individuals or groups but of systems of meaning which constitute information favoring certain individuals and group interest” (Deetz & Mumby, 1985, p. 369). In addition, “power is a medium of relations in which subjectivity... is produced, transformed, or reproduced through the social practices within which such power is exercised” (Knights & Willmott, 1989, p.541). These explanations of power treat communication as a means through which cognitive human beings can interpret, co-create meaning, and co-construct realities and world views through social interaction.

Power relations can be revealed in language use when meanings co-created privilege certain forms of socially constructed knowledge effectively “naturalizing” certain ways of making sense of the world-specifically as “right” and “wrong”, “just” and “unjust” and other naturally associated social constructions that appear as cultural norms. In this study, power relations are addressed through the identification and discussion of ideological frames that appear to both restrict and marginalize alternative ways of knowing a culture (Mumby, 2001). In this way, power relations is eminent in the social use of language as it inherently privileges certain forms of knowledge and understandings while hindering others from emerging as legitimate within a given culture.

The social process of continuously promoting some realities while delegitimizing others positions language use as functioning to reproduce and reify specific ideals and declare sectional interests as absolute truth (Alvesson, 2002). As a consequence, power relations can be potentially harmful as they permit hegemonic formations to occur in unquestioned ways and that further become understood as “unchangeable” by those who are marginalized in a cultures embrace of certain “norms” of language use. Language use further is capable of revealing ideological frames that serve to “normalize” certain cultural norms, necessarily treating alternative frames as “abnormal” or “irrational” ways of understanding that culture.

### Language

Language is the main construct through which subjects create inter-subjective understandings and co-constructed meanings about the world (Alvesson, 2002). Use of language reflects, presents and reproduces the dominant controlling interests within social life (Deetz & Mumby, 1985). As a result, our cultural norms and values are shaped

by sectional interest or persons in positions of power. This means that language is not simply a medium or a transmitter of power laden information, but specifically reflects and aids in the construction and reification of certain meanings we then come to accept as our realities in the form of ideological frames (Deetz & Mumby, 1985). In this way, language is constitutive of power relations.

Language also does not have inherent meanings associated with what is spoken or written. For example, saying or writing the word “chair” does not naturally give the word meaning without social interpretation and dialogue about what a chair is or should be used for: “Language is a structure of material marks or sounds which are in themselves ‘undecidable’ and upon which meaning has to be imposed” (Cooper, 1989, p.480). In this regard, the importance of language in social interaction as a way to derive shared meanings and understandings about the world is clear.

The language used within dancehall stories told by musicians and fans as well as performed in communicative cultural performances is power laden and reflects sectional interests by those in positions of power and control. As participants within dancehall culture are typically unaware of these power relations influences produce, I seek to identify and critically discuss the co-construction and development of what is referred to and produced as “knowledge” in dancehall culture stories. In focusing on how specific ideological frames are revealed, the way that language used in stories can be seen to give preference to certain ideals, values and morals while simultaneously excluding others can potentially help to understand dancehall music and culture in unique ways. Thus, dancehall stories create and recreate dominant ways of knowing dancehall culture’s members, their values and the larger world they live in.

### Ideological Frames

When certain forms of power relations are maintained and reproduced through language that causes specific forms of knowledge to be accepted as universal and absolute ways of understanding cultural norms, particular ideological frames can be said to emerge. Ideological frames are “the process of symbolically creating systems of meaning through which social actors’ identities are constituted and situated within relations of power” (Mumby, 2001, p.587). These systems of meaning are entangled in power relations, allowing subjects to interpret what exists, and does not exist, who s/he is and is not, what is right and wrong, what is just and unjust, what should be valued and not valued, what is achievable and unachievable (Mumby, 2001).

Ideological frames co-create and reflect a culture through human social interaction. Thus, persons construct their senses of self in relation to their understandings of cultural norms and values that shape their world views. Ideological frames affect the way persons act, think and live their lives by presenting sectional interests as universal, simultaneously rejecting contradictory interests, and by “making natural” social constructions by reifying them as objective manifestations that exist apart from people who share them as meaningful (Mumby, 1987). As a result, the process of cultural formations are directly linked to what is constructed within the system of meaning making and what has become understood to be “ideological” (Deetz & Mumby, 1985; Mumby, 2001).

Ideological frames are not simply abstract ideals, rather, they are material performances found in everyday communication and practices of subjects. Such frames simultaneously have a relational affect in how they create the lived experience of their

subjects (Mumby, 2001). Therefore ideological frames revealed in dancehall stories can be seen as related to material practices and performances of dancehall culture. The language apparent in these stories reveal choices that embrace (or reject) particular ideological perspectives that have consequences. In this way, dancehall stories reveal ideological functions and systems of “naturalization” that promote particular understandings of culture.

Dancehall narratives are ideologically functional because they constantly articulate a unique cultural existence while simultaneously rejecting other possible accounts of reality. They represent sectional interests and perspectives as universal in ways that reify certain stories as natural or “just the way things are.” Dancehall stories bring forth particular perspectives on subjects dealing with cultural formations that fail to represent alternative perspectives. In this way power relations become apparent in the assessment of how dancehall stories lead, confine, and sometimes distort dancehall fans’ and others’ perceptions of reality by articulating particular dancehall ideals and ideological frames.

### **Entering into the Conversation**

As stated previously, there are a plethora of studies that deal with the influence of stories in music and culture as well as their effects (Rentfrow, McDonald & Oldmeadow, 2009). The majority of these studies have investigated the relationship between specific westernized mainstream genres of musical cultures such as pop, classical and hip hop on various western demographics (Henry et al., 2010; Inglis, 2007; LaBennett, 2009; Perullo, 2005). That being said, there seems to be minimal academic scholarship produced about non-western musical and cultural stories and their influence on non-

western members of the culture in question due to its “foreign” nature. This limited scholarship is perpetuated in the communication field. By engaging in this study, I plan to help fill such a void by exploring the communicative construction of “good reasons” in dancehall stories analyzed within the frame of the narrative paradigm.

This study allows scholars and laypersons alike to better understand Caribbean dancehall enthusiasts and the impact of dancehall stories on cultural members and “outsiders” as revealed through both lyrical and participant stories and the embodied communicative cultural performances engaged in two dancehall events. For persons of Caribbean origin who are heavily embedded within the dancehall music culture, this research allows a more critical understanding of the power relations that affect their understandings and experiences of dancehall culture. Furthermore, this study can allow readers of other cultures to better understand the influence of narratives more generally in “naturalizing” cultural norms and practices. Thus, a more comprehensive understanding of dancehall culture can be engaged by discussing how stories relate, identify and communicate with persons across cultures, and understanding the influence of narratives on musical cultures and practices may be further significant. This interest leads to two primary research questions:

**RQ 1:** In what ways do stories (specifically, lyrical stories in dancehall music, participant stories about dancehall music and culture, and communicative cultural performances exposed as narratives in participant-observation of two dancehall events) produce particular understandings of Caribbean dancehall culture? And in what ways are these understandings consequential?

**RQ 2:** What “good reasons” (as described by Fisher’s narrative paradigm theory) emerge in dancehall lyrical narratives, dancehall fans’ narratives, and my own narratives about the influence of dancehall music in their lives? In what ways do these “good reasons” additionally appear as *communicative cultural performances* by patrons at two particular dancehall cultural events?

## CHAPTER TWO: METHOD

To understand the data I collected calls for a methodological guide to aid in identifying and gathering findings. For this reason, an interpretive approach was employed as the primary method of data collection in attempt to understand lyrical stories, participant, narratives and communicative cultural performances about dancehall music and culture. The following section assists in understanding the embedded assumptions of interpretivism and its relation to qualitative methods of data collection and rhetorical methods of narrative analysis.

### **Interpretivism**

Researchers who take an interpretive position rely on the use of subjectivity of social action, symbols and language while rejecting claims of one-dimensional causality (Howard, 2010). The focus of this interpretivist approach is the “essential meanings of cultures, representations, or discourses while recognizing that each articulation of meaning is totally and incontrovertibly subjective” (Howard, 2010, p.8). This subjectivity proposes that there is not one form of absolute truth that exists. Rather multiple truths, meanings or interpretations can be gleaned from a particular phenomenon or phenomena under study by recognizing the various social actions, symbols, and language choices that create our understandings of the world. In other words, the material, talk, actions, and performances of dancehall fans may produce shared meanings that are meaningful in various ways. Howard (2010) claims that the world can be

dissected in various ways to bring forth multiple readings, each of which can be seen as valid, reliable, and dependent on the stance and perspective taken by the researcher. Interpretivists argue that it is inconceivable that any two persons can produce the exact same interpretation from the exact same position. This is due towards the variation and multiple interpretations that can emerge within the individual own perspective, each interpretation however contain considerable value within (Howard, 2010).

Validity from an interpretive point of view requires that findings be “well grounded and supportable” (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 175). What is meant by this is that evidence must be presented in a way that supports specific conclusions while simultaneously recognizing the possibility of alternative conclusions to be drawn (Polkinghorne, 1988). In this way, validity and significance for interpretive methods is obtained through discussions of likelihood rather than certainty.

### **Time and Place**

The data collection for this study was completed in a one month time frame; between May 20 and June 20, 2012 on the Caribbean island of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. Trinidad and Tobago, while not the origin or birthplace of dancehall music, has a deeply embedded and lively dancehall culture because of its location and proximity to Jamaica. It is also my home island. Thus my investigation of dancehall narrative lyrics as well as dancehall fans stories and communicative cultural performances at particular dancehall events made my entrance into this site quite easy. In other words, investigating dancehall fans and dancehall culture in Trinidad and Tobago provided a comfortable and familiar experience, even though the addition of my scholarly perspective was new.

## **Demographic**

I was most interested in talking with and observing fans of dancehall music that lived on the Caribbean island of Trinidad and Tobago. All participants were above the age of twenty-one. Participants were recruited in two ways: via face to face recruitment and email recruitment (see appendix C and D). Possible participants were first required to meet the criterion of being self proclaimed dancehall fans. After assuring this, I engaged in personally recruiting participants until I deemed my efforts appropriately exhaustive and able to access sufficient data for answering the Research Questions guiding this study. Both men and women were sought after in an attempt to represent both genders in the sense making of dancehall culture. Although I strived to have equal men and women interviewed I was not able to find as many women as men to participate. In addition, class, ethnicity, status, economic wealth or background was not a focus for participant selection. Approval from Boise State University Institutional Review Board was granted before any work took place to ensure humane practices, safety, and well-being of all participants. The demographic that I chose to focus on was very important because it impacted the method used to data collect as well as the type of data I was able to gather.

## **Participants**

Caribbean dancehall music fans were recruited through a method of snowball sampling (Lindlof & Taylor, 2010). In this way, I began recruiting participants who I knew personally who then aided in referring other fans of dancehall music who may be willing to participate in my study. This snowball method of recruitment aided in eradicating excessive time and complication often associated with recruiting participants utilized in other sampling techniques (Lindlof & Taylor, 2010). Fourteen participants

discussed and displayed their understandings of meanings and influence of stories in dancehall music in formal interviews. Of the fourteen persons interviewed, ten were men and four were women. In order to protect the privacy and confidentiality of all participants involved, the actual names of participants have been removed and replaced with pseudonyms. Any specific identifying characteristics or information revealing participants as persons in particular have also been deleted. In addition, participants' consent was ensured through signing a consent form (see Appendix B) that described the nature and details of the study before they agreed to participate. Participants were given sufficient time to read, understand and ask questions that they might have had concerning participating in the study.

### **Data Collection Techniques**

#### Interviews

Three main qualitative approaches to data collection have been exercised in an attempt to gather participants' stories and communicative cultural performances about dancehall culture. The first of these methods was formal interviews (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Lindlof & Taylor, 2010). Although identified as a formal interview in academic terms, I prefer the term semi-structured conversations. My objective here was to let the stories and various experiences of participants emerge through their conversations with me as naturally as possible without the feeling of rigidity that sometimes emerge within formal interview conditions. I also identified myself as a fan and listener of dancehall music within dancehall culture in an attempt to ensure interviews were relatable, enjoyable, natural and comfortable in nature. Interviews were conducted within chosen

appropriate locations agreed upon by myself and participants with the use of an audio recorder to aid with recording, transcription and data analysis (Lindlof & Taylor, 2010). Interviews took place in various locations and settings. These included participants' homes, my home, in recreational parks, at restaurants, on the phone, and through Skype online video interactive chat when meeting in person attempts were futile. An interview guide of central questions was used at each interview (see appendix A) to ensure consistency of specific questions that lent themselves to the eliciting of certain topics in the form of stories. It was my intention to have interviews evolve naturally as they developed in each exchange. For this reason the interview protocol was adaptable and flexible depending on the course taken in each interview. All participants were interviewed individually in order to allow me to fully understand each particular experience in its unique way and context. Interviews were scheduled and lasted between twenty minutes for the shortest and one hour and thirty minutes for the longest. Interviews averaged about forty-five minutes in length.

### Participant-Observation

Participant-observation was also used as a technique to gather various *communicative cultural performances* and manifestations of dancehall culture as produced by patrons within two particular dancehall events. It is also important to note that my participant-observation data collection activities was not employed as an outsider to dancehall culture looking in, but from the perspective of someone who has long been a dancehall fan myself. I have been involved with dancehall music and culture throughout my entire life, and participated in two dancehall related events as a participant-observer in attempt to record communicative cultural performances of dancehall culture as

embodied narratives performed by patrons through their language, dress, actions, and interactions (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Lindlof & Taylor, 2010). The first of these participant-observations occurred at a local dancehall themed club in the city of St. James located on what is known as “The Ave” by locals. The second event I attended was at a dancehall themed party held at a local community centre. It was hosted by a local urban radio station. Both events were late night to early morning events held on a Saturday. By attending these two events, I aimed to study the embodied narratives about dancehall culture as found in the communicative cultural performances emergent in these two events. Participant-observation allowed me to experience instances where meanings were actually seen in process of being shared rather than as already understood as in the realm of interviews only (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Lindlof & Taylor, 2010).

Field notes from my participant-observation sessions were also utilized as a way to record my experiences in detail. These field notes at the first event were hand written periodically in a small notepad during self imposed breaks in secluded/ bathroom areas out of sight of main patrons. At the second event, field notes were noted on my iPhone in the notes section in my phone. Using my phone instead of a notepad allowed me to mask my note taking more effectively as it looked as though I was texting or using a normal cell phone function to the uncritical eye. It also allowed me not to leave the main event area reducing the likelihood of missing important communicative cultural performances emergent during my absence. Data from both dancehall themed events were extrapolated directly after the event when I returned home and kept in a safe area. These field notes were both transferred onto a single note book and left in hand written form. Both participant-observation activities averaged approximately six hours in length.

### Material Artifacts Collection

Finally, specific material artifacts in the form of CDs and lyrical transcripts were collected, read, and interpreted in the pursuit of gaining a more comprehensive understanding of dancehall stories and their influence on participants (Lindlof & Taylor, 2010). According to Lindlof & Taylor (2010), “Text, objects and spaces do have a lot to ‘say’ when we read them alongside the living voices of informants and other social actors” (p.217). These artifacts varied from case to case and were often brought to my attention by a specific participant. For example, lyrical transcripts and specific recordings of dancehall songs were identified by participants and then analyzed because they aided in putting into perspective the reason(s) why listeners of dancehall music identified with particular stories heard within songs into relation.

### **Approach to Data Analysis**

Collected data was first identified as meeting the criteria of “story” discussed previously in this study, specifically ensuring that the data reflected accounts of particular events and/ or individuals as defined by Trujillo and Dionisopoulos (1987). I then organized these stories thematically by interpreting themes I deemed prominent from the various descriptive stories contained in my communicative cultural performances narratives, dancehall lyrical stories transcripts, as well as in the transcribed stories told by participants about their own experience with dancehall music and culture. Being part of dancehall culture as well as having an in depth scholastic understanding of dancehall themes allowed me to understand and interpret themes in unique ways. Many themes emerged in primary interpretations, however only three were used in this study to facilitate the size and scope of this research. In addition, the three themes that were used

in findings were the most prominent found in the stories told throughout the three types (lyrical, participant and performance) of stories. For the interviews conducted, after transcription, each interview was analyzed for thematic stories individually and coded notes were made in each story found to allow efficiency of repetitive codes and ideas to emerge throughout all the stories told. By going through each interview transcript using this process, the amount of raw data gathered was reduced to a manageable size and allowed for essential and important data to be presented within the parameters of the study (Keyton, 2011). This same theme and coding process was completed for dancehall artists' lyrical stories that were brought to my attention from participants during interviews as well as my own stories of communicative cultural performances during dancehall events. These three types of stories were examined further as I realized the "themes" emerged were more than topical; they revealed ideological frames that "naturalized" particular ways of understanding dancehall culture. By understanding stories as revealing particular ideological frames, analysis of "good reasons" in these stories served to "assess" (according to Fisher's test) their significance. By focusing on whether or not each of these stories produced "good reasons" according to Fisher's (1985b) theory of narrative paradigm, it can be further understood how these stories have come to reveal naturalizing frames and why members of a culture choose to adhere (or reject) such stories heard. My findings reflect the fostering of an interpretive approach to knowing, and a narrative perspective of cultural argument that both reveal specific power relations through the emergence of ideological frames as well as rhetorical elements in the form of "good reasons" that can be adopted by members of Caribbean dancehall culture.

## CHAPTER THREE: FINDINGS

### **Dancehall Ideological Frames**

All interviewees were asked to talk about some of their favorite and influential dancehall songs in addition to sharing how the stories heard within these songs have impacted their lives. Since I am interested in how stories those told by participants, embedded in dancehall music lyrics and my own narratives of communicative cultural performances expose powerful ideas, ideals and perspectives, I find it useful in terms of the central ideological frames they revealed. Ideological frames became apparent when certain systems of meanings were maintained and reproduced through a story's language use that exposed specific types of interests while simultaneously rejecting others (Mumby, 2001). Stories that presented specific interests or understandings as universal, and rejected contradictory positions, or made "natural" that which was otherwise socially constructed through language, were seen to function as meaningful within particular ideological frames in and within a specific context (Mumby, 2001). In seeking to understand the lyrical stories in dancehall music, participants' stories about dancehall music and culture, and the communicative cultural performances stories of dancehall members actions, identification of these ideological frames provides a way to critically display and discuss the inherent power of stories for this specific culture. Understanding these ideological frames furthers my application of Fisher's test of "good reasons" by allowing for critical discussion of how dancehall fans' and artists' adoption of such

“good reasons” into their lives is significant and useful to themselves and to the larger process of dancehall culture formation.

Stories in this study served as the central unit of analysis. They included (1) participant stories about dancehall music and culture as told in formal interviews (2) dancehall music lyrical stories, and (3) stories reflecting the communicative cultural performances emergent in my participant-observation of two dancehall music events. I believe that my own stories of these communicative cultural performances is significant because it displays and embodies ways of creating shared meaning of cultural norm understandings. My accounts of these communicative cultural performances reflect various cultural performance manifestations that can be seen to be embodied and performed stories of cultural meanings. These specifically include stories performing jargon, material makeup, and rituals displayed by patrons. These communicative cultural performances also revealed ideological frames and serve to foster a further discussion of how such analysis relates to Fisher’s “good reasons” in specific ways.

As a point of clarification and style, dancehall lyrics often reflect specific Creole English sentences that in verbatim may be difficult for American and British English speakers to understand. As a result, some lyrics referred to in this section have been translated to Standard English for ease of such readers’ understandings. All stories discussed here met the criteria of a “story” for the purposes of this research. The definition used to determine such data was adopted from Trujillo and Dionisopoulos (1987) who define stories as “accounts about particular events and/or particular individuals” (p.205). These stories were told by participants, heard through lyrics as well as observed and retold by me as a participant-observer in dancehall cultural events.

Analysis of these stories revealed three prominent ideological frames: 1) don and flamboyant showmanship, 2) sex, heterosexuality, and vulgarity, and 3) spirituality. The following section further explains and illustrates how these ideological frames reveal powerful influences that may otherwise remain invisible if only applying Fisher's test of "good reasons" to determine the usefulness of dancehall stories to reveal something significant about dancehall culture.

### Don and Flamboyant Showmanship

The first ideological frame revealed specific interests that reified and naturalized the idea that certain individuals and groups were more socially important, superior, fashionable, and attractive than others. Further, these same individuals and groups were seen to be centralized by association, wealth, and status effectively marginalizing those who were not seen as associated. Stories adopting this ideological frame revealed specific interests of those in positions of influence as being flamboyant, charismatic within their environment, allowing for a command of respect, viewed as authoritative while still highly regarded by others, especially those of the opposite sex. For example artist Vybez Kartel's song entitled *So Much Woman* depicts the lifestyle of a person with "boss-like" qualities. To be "boss-like" in dancehall culture means appearing wealthy, charming, and physically attractive to members of the opposite sex it is primarily associated with attributes of men. Vybez Kartel story naturalizes this characteristic by promoting being flamboyant while simultaneously shutting out other competing opinions for what could be presented as other viable alternatives to being a person of status and desire:

Touch [to go out] the road with a pack of condoms cause I get girls anywhere that I walk, and I don't have to say a word to a girl cause my style and my smile and my pretty skin talks. I smell sweet but I'm stinking rich, poor girl I will light

you wherever was dark, they just hear when the Benz just park and only girls come circle circle like shark, world boss! I have women like the sea has sand, like the earth has dirt, like Kellogg have corn, when it comes to gallis [womanizing] business nobody don't compare to me only Shawn Storm, I don't use my money cause I have charm... my life come in like Domino class, girl's nipples stand up at attention anytime that I pass, world boss!

From illustrating ideals through examples of himself employing high class “style,” “charm,” wealth and attractive appearance, Vybez Kartel reified systems of meanings for what it means to be a person of high prestige by claiming he is “rich”, a don by “lighting” or enhancing females and display flamboyant showmanship by showing off his “Benz”.

Another dancehall story is presented in Popcaan's song entitled *Party Shot*, targeted towards an audience who can understand the way he explains what it means to be a person of prestige in dancehall culture. Explaining how drinking alcohol freely, having a merry time, being fashionable while surrounded by friends and associates reifies and naturalizes this conceptualization of don and flamboyant ideals:

As I reached I saw girls upon their head tops I swore I didn't want to go bed back [back to bed], apple vodka we drank till our skulls were hot, the party wasn't dead like Dovecot [prominent cemetery in Jamaica], I would circle around that one part then a lot of girls would shout out hi world boss... The girls would say yeooww [infamous noise Popcaan regularly makes within his songs] because it's their favorite talk and they would gyrate and dance their favorite parts. Girls dance and Jamie laughs, our Clarks [a brand of footwear] are real we don't wear any knock offs.

Popcaan's story tells of trendy style through fashionable footwear in the form of “Clarks,” freely consuming alcohol- “apple vodka we drank till our skulls were hot”, and the importance of being perceived as attractive to women as he is acknowledged “hi world boss” by employing don and flamboyant showmanship ideals. In this way, this

story reveals the special interests of don and flamboyant showmanship which are naturalized.

Participant narratives reinforced that someone perceived to carry stature in dancehall culture was both admired and considered a don or “the man.” Such stature was clearly connected to being considered attractive to the opposite sex. Participants talked about themselves and others as striving to be considered the main attraction or the center of attention. Being a “boss” who is seen as fashionable and lauded for their style and ability to affect how others enjoy themselves were all discussed as important parts of dancehall culture. It was clear that flamboyant showmanship and don [boss] status were considered valuable. For example, Kim told of her understanding of don and flamboyant showmanship ideals in dancehall culture. Her story reveals how seemingly universal and “natural” it is for persons to strive to be flamboyant as this is what is continuously heard in dancehall lyrics. Her story highlights the special interest that persons of “worth” in dancehall culture attempt to act on behalf of:

Dancehall is very ostentatious, it's very loud. Very out there being seen and I think that's definitely a part of my personality and it definitely pushes you a lot. When you go into a dancehall party everybody is trying to look their best. And it's ironic because the lower class is completely engrained into dancehall culture and they are the ones who are flossing and they're up to the time with fashion and everything. It affects fashion, my fashion sense, a lot of my peers fashion sense. It's about being seen and wanting to be seen and making sure your better than the next. The poorest of the poor and the rich all look good. Everybody is hyping. It's a hype. So everybody is hype no matter what you have. It's a lot of flossing, it's a lot of buying bottles and resting it by your feet and you have your drinks and cup of ice. You have a lot of glam, glamorous; everybody is dressed really nice literally. A lot of men wear chains, men wear unique types of jewelry it's just like a fan fare of fashion, it's a fashion show. There is a lot of competition a lot of hype, everybody try to ball [appear to spend lots of money], floss and pop bottles. I think as a people we like to make it known that we're good. Not poor not broke or starving. Even if you are your acting like you aren't. Even though things aren't good in your life, were out on a brave face and we're hyping it anyway.

From her story of dancehall fans “flossing,” “hyping,” and attempting to be “glamorous” at dancehall events, we can see how such an explanation points to the expectation that members of dancehall culture aim to be perceived as it naturalizes don and are capable of displaying flamboyant showmanship ideals.

David followed a similar sentiment and gave insight on his process of adopting flamboyant showmanship and boss-like practices in his own experiences in dancehall culture. He specifically told stories of how this flamboyant and don ideal allowed him to feel confident with women and otherwise perceived as more “social.” David also explained how barriers to being able to act boss-like and in a flamboyant manner led to a feeling of uncomfortableness, showcasing how embedded naturalization processes associated with adopting these flamboyant showmanship and don ideals can affect not just social action but individual reaction:

Vybez Kartel sings about everybody already knows he is the world boss and his overall motive when he sings about he’s on the move and he touch the road with a box of condoms. So you can tell by listening to this it makes you feel like a world boss. And when he sings that his Mercedes Benz is parked up and girls start to circle like sharks, he makes you feel like you are the world boss. I’m telling you. When I listen to those lyrics and I roll out I do feel really different. Clean and you roll out. It makes you feel good, like you could see any girl and talk to her. It makes you feel like you’re a king. That’s the word to describe the feeling. The world boss. We aren’t talking about a joke boss or an island boss. I’m talking about a world boss. You can go quite Korea and they would be attracted to you. Once I play those types of songs and I’m ready to go out my confidence gets high. My confidence gets real high... When I go out, I make sure and provide right up. If I can’t do that I don’t feel comfortable. You understand? When I’m going out and Popcaan says “drink till your skull hot” drinking this type of liquor with this type of cranberry chaser. I’m making sure to get that specifically. I get the exact same drink he’s drinking in his song just to create the atmosphere to live it out. That’s the hype in it. Then I’m watching at everybody to observe if they’re having a nice time knowing that you created that scenery. You know? And let them think about it. “Wow I’m having a blast.” And so it goes.

David's remarks on feeling like a "king" and a "world boss" during his participation in dancehall events reinforces the "natural" ideals noted in the previous dancehall artists stories that together allows him to "create an atmosphere" that expects don and flamboyant showmanship ideals to be "lived out" to truly be part of dancehall music and culture.

Communicative cultural performances of don and flamboyant showmanship ideals were also evident at the dancehall events I participated in. In particular competitive flamboyant showmanship by both men and women told a story of these ideals that embodied and informed the way such ideas were enacted, not just talked about or accounted for by people who self professed to be a part of the culture. In particular, various women competed with each other for positions on who displayed more dominance and appeal by their sexual and vulgar dances and actions, as well as their flashy fashion appearances by wearing the most revealing outfits. The women who won these appealing competitions made women who were victorious naturally become noticed and respected by their female peers while being desired by men; especially by their male equally superior counterparts. These men profiled their assets and competed for the attention of women and other onlookers as they illustrated that they also appeared flamboyant, wealthy and in control of their surroundings. It seemed imperative for certain men to appear in charge of their surroundings, important, and not to be bothered nor interfered by persons of seemingly lower standards or stature than oneself within the dancehall. Here some men "peacocked" by standing with open broad stances to maximize space used, surrounded themselves with what seemed to be close friends, associates and women of similar flamboyant appearances as well as bought alcoholic

beverages by the entire bottle instead of the more typical personal sized drinks. These rituals displayed how men and women participating attempted to be perceived as “important” and boss-like in dancehall culture. This showmanship was particularly embodied by men as a way to gain the acknowledgement and interest of nearby women. These ritualistic story performances by both men and women patrons at the two dancehall events reveal don and flamboyant showmanship positions that naturalize and reify specific ways of performing in dancehall culture.

Another example of embodied stories that emerged had to do with the adornment of jewelry by patrons and their material makeup. I noticed that many women wore jewelry of various forms to aid in the pursuit of “appearing glamorous” and “attractive” as they proudly displayed these ornaments throughout the events. Gold and silver were the predominant types of jewelry that appeared in the form of bracelets, chains, rings, earrings, necklaces and watches that made women who wore these adornments to seem more flamboyant and appealing than those who did not. Some men also wore bigger more noticeable forms of jewelry that were predominantly gold and silver. Such jewelry appeared in the form of hand bands, bracelets, chains, rings, gold teeth and watches. Men who wore these bigger adornments were assumed to be of status or prestige as jewelry pieces of those types are expensive and valued and normally associated with some form of importance. In regards to dress wear for men, the dress code was primarily slim to loose fitted pants or jeans accompanied by fashionable sneakers or shoes that “matched” what they were wearing in some form which allowed those who portrayed this look to be viewed as fashionable. Fashionable and contemporary male shirts of various sorts were also worn in ways that covered the main torso areas and upper arms (short-sleeved shirts)

most often displaying their lower arms for women visual pleasure. The adornment of jewelry and fashionable clothing styles in my own story of dancehall culture speaks to the naturalization process of the revealed don and flamboyant showmanship frame that is reified by material makeup performances of culture.

The last type of story that was performed in communicative cultural performances as it relates to don and flamboyant ideals appeared in particular terms specifically that of jargon. I heard emotional jargon terms like “boss man” and “shotta” (a person of high dancehall cultural status) often during my participant-observation activities. These words were used most often as a form of greeting and acknowledgement by men attempting to show respect to other men by acknowledging their status as part of dancehall culture as it referred to women, money, buying premium alcoholic drinks or fashionable styles. Because of this acknowledgement of being a “boss” to Caribbean dancehall standards, it can be noted the naturalization and reification processes from what was heard in lyrical stories and participants stories regarding don and flamboyant positions now seen through patrons embodied stories through their own cultural performances of jargon.

### Sex, Heterosexuality and Vulgarity

Stories in dancehall songs identified by participants as significant influences in their own lives also revealed an ideological frame that normalized particular understandings of sex, heterosexuality, and vulgarity. This ideological frame included stories that valued, naturalized and reified ideals of heterosexual norms of engaging in sexually active and promiscuous practices, while, simultaneously rejecting asexual interests and homosexual practices. In this way, these stories presented an ideal way of being sexual that appeared to be universally understood and embraced in dancehall

culture. One example of how this emerged in the song entitled *Virginity* sung by dancehall artist Vybez Kartel (alongside Indu). The story they tell goes into vulgar and sexually explicit detail about the first time he (Vybez Kartel) “took” his lover’s (Indu) virginity:

Remember when I took away your virginity, first time at the romping shop, you yelled out when I forced it in from the time we start it stopped, you still felt like a virgin, and you knew how to sit down on top, you still yell when I force it in. Remember the first wuk [sex], remember the first time stomach hurt up, I pushed in an inch and it bucked and it stuck, you ran off of me and you got up and got cut.

The story permeates the entire song and continues to affirm the goal of sexual pleasure as primary to all other ways of engaging in a romantic relationship. Although this may be seen to be an expression of hyper-masculinity, Indu reflects a similar style of telling her “version” of the same story: “I remember the first wood, your cock was hot but the wuk [sex] was good, my body started to quiver every shove that you shoved, yes yes yes, you took my virginity.” These recollections of graphic sexual experiences in dancehall music serve to reify sex as primarily vulgar and focused on engaging in performances of pleasure that are graphically physical in particular ways. Further, the commonly addressed topic of sex, heterosexuality, and vulgarity in dancehall stories serves to treat these concepts and practices as “normal” rather than “taboo.”

Another story about sex, heterosexuality and vulgarity that serves to “naturalize” these ideas in particular ways can be seen in dancehall artist Mavado’s single entitled *Inside the Car Back* [back seat of a car]. In this song, Mavado tells a story about a place often associated with the inane practices of getting from one place to another that, in dancehall culture, is clearly associated primarily as a place where practices of sex and

vulgarity regularly occur. His sexually graphic tale of his own sex performances tell of his sexual “conquest”:

She said, push David [Mavado’s birth name] push, she said she’s not stoosh [stuck up] she doesn’t care if we have sex inside the bush, she said push David push, she said oh wow. She wanted me give her inside the car back, she doesn’t care she wanted the spear, so we had sex on the car top. She said gyrate so I forced it up inside her, she said wow! It feels like a truck inside her, she said don’t stop, don’t stop don’t stop. She sat down on my dick like a chair, so I removed her g-string underwear, vagina too fat so it had to share, so I gave her to handle it, she said lord wow, bangle it, it was too big so she couldn’t dismantle it, so now she walks with a shamble dip.

From the graphic descriptions and detailed accounts of sexual acts explained in this story, Mavado reifies and naturalizes sex as a prominent norm by having “sex on the car top,” heterosexuality as reifying his partner as female and vulgarity by elements such as “she doesn’t care if we had sex inside the bush”.

Like the stories told in dancehall lyrics, participants also told stories that revealed a particular ideological frame of sex, heterosexuality and vulgarity. Bob, for example, shared what made dancehall culture enticing for him. His story reflects not only his own ideas about sex, heterosexuality, and vulgarity, but also how such ideas can produce expectations about how others should act, thus, naturalizing his ideas as the “way things are”:

If a girl came to wine [dance sexually] on you, either you throw back wine on her or you stand up and take it, but for me I have to respond. Once the girls are dancing sexually that’s what I want to see, girls wining, girls getting down everybody just getting down and a lot of sexual movements happening.

Bob’s story illustrates how sexual movement (re)presents not just invitations for sexual relations between heterosexual individuals but larger social expectations for how to respond and otherwise understand heterosexual norms of relation. Responding to

sexual moves with sexual moves of his own illustrates Bob's "norm" of sexual and vulgar practices with women specifically when he says "if a girl came to wine on you," he shows that "he has to respond."

Kacy's story also revealed an ideological frame of sex, heterosexuality and vulgarity that was directly attributed to influence from a dancehall song that focuses on describing particular sexual positions. Her story illustrates how dancehall cultural norms can be created in the stories embedded in musical lyrics and reified and naturalize in the ways that dancehall fans understand and put into practice these norms. In Kacy's case, this meant that sex and sexual acts are understood to be primarily pleasurable, meant to be enjoyed and cherished:

So *Inside the Car Back*, that song is basically about having sex in a car, doing it in a car... I'll be honest, I've done things in my car, many times and when I hear this song it just reminds me of my past and things I've done and it was great memories, it would carry me back to a time I had before you know? Good memories.

Kacy's "confession" that she has been influenced by the ways that this song discusses sex and sexual practices reveals how stories can- and do- produce particular ideological frames that align with larger systems of meanings and provide opportunities to make sense of sex, heterosexuality, and vulgarity in particular ways. In Kacy's story, she makes sense of her own sexual acts as "appropriate" and being able to foster "great memories."

David, another dancehall fan, told a story about dancehall lyrical stories are an embedded part of his and other dancehall fans' lives. By choosing the words "just being part of life," David revealed an ideological frame of sex, heterosexuality and vulgarity that naturalizes this topic of dancehall lyrical stories as not just common but "natural":

Vybez Kartel brought out a song that spoke about taking away a girl's virginity. Singing about a young girl in his neighborhood comes to his house, sees him, likes him and he takes away the girl's virginity... I enjoyed that song because it's something that people would think about but nobody would say it. The fact that they actually placed it in writing in song you think to yourself. Unbelievable, they actually talked about that in their song. The thing that everybody thinks about. Because in life, really and truly everybody has been through that situation because it's part of life.

David's story treats sex, particularly the act of engaging in sex for the first time, as a universally understood experience that has ideals that are understood similarly by everyone in dancehall culture. When he states that "everybody has been through that situation." It points to the universality of sex.

These stories in dancehall lyrics and told by dancehall fans were not the only ways that this ideological frame was revealed. My own experiences at two dancehall events revealed particular communicative cultural performances that displayed embodied stories of sexual and vulgar acts that appeared to be accepted as natural ways that dancehall culture was experienced. In particular, women sexually moved their waistlines in counter clockwise directions to fast and slow tempo speed beats of dancehall songs as a form of enjoyment and attraction to the opposite sex. One song in particular, *Jiggle it*, commanded women through lyrics to do just that with their bodies. Women all around the dance floor "jiggled" in various sexually proactive ways in time to the music while men either looked on in praise or joined women in close physical proximity by dancing behind them to attempt to stimulate sexual pleasure. Another song entitled *Work* asked for women to "work" hard by dancing in vulgar and lewd ways so that others (presumably men) could view this "work" for enjoyment. The ritual involved dancing in extremely sexual and vulgar ways, especially using their mid sections to perform specific sexual commands announced by the dancehall singer. This caused many women at the

event to begin dancing hyper and sexual as though they placed extra effort into dancing to symbolize “working” as the song insisted. This ritual of sexual dances naturalized the norm of sex, heterosexuality and vulgarity by women performances of these dances for the pleasure of men.

Women also wore sexually stimulating and revealing outfits. These revealing wear for women included short jeans, short pants and short dresses that hovered around the backside regions. Women also wore tightly fitted tops that displayed their womanly figures while wearing fashionable shoes, heels and sandals that went along with their respective outfits. It can be assumed that such revealing outfits were worn primarily for the enjoyment of male counterparts at dancehall events as women paraded in front of patrons in various ways which seemed to attract the attention of patrons particularly men. The material dress understood in this story of participants cultural performances reifies and naturalizes the understanding of sex, heterosexual and vulgar ideals in dancehall culture by their embodiment of such understandings and the value placed in execution.

### Spirituality

The last central ideological frame that was revealed in all three types of stories was that of spirituality. By “spirituality,” I mean that there was a distinct focus on being mindful of the presence of a higher power. This ideological frame naturalized and reified the idea of having a connection with God [or more specifically, “Jah”] while rejecting ideas that opposed godliness or competing interests to understand love and respect as inherently connected to faith in God. One song by dancehall artist Sizzla entitled  *Holding Firm* told a story about the role of comfort that was associated with faith in God:

Hail Jah [God], always hailing him. I've been here all days of my life, works good and queer I've behold with my sight. Some may share others do as they like, some your flesh they want to tear with a fork and knife. Some don't care their heart is like ice, after kill another they rejoice but I'm holding firm every man deserve to earn, Jah Jah come an plant with success. Holding firm every man deserve to earn, Jah won't let you sink me in the mess. Heavy obstacles he has moved, you can't eat my food, Jah alone earns all the praise.

This story speaks to the importance of being loyal and faithful to Jah in such a way that employs listeners to associate all human successes and great feats with the grace of a higher power bestowed unto individuals who display a clear faith and love for Jah. From mentioning "Jah won't let you sink me in the mess" alongside "Jah alone earn all the praise," shows the foundation and trust place in a spiritual being that can be found in dancehall lyrical stories that bring forth particular spiritual interest as truth.

The ideological frames of spirituality in dancehall lyrical stories further reified Jah as the almighty and overarching power to call on for guidance. This way of naturalizing how one should seek "guidance" can be particularly heard in dancehall artist Konshens's song entitled *Realst Song*. In this song, Konshens tells a story about asking for guidance and support to make it through a turbulent time in life:

This is a prayer to the father, for him to guide your steps as he sits on his throne, show us the way to get the food and the water, and do not make us grudge nobody for their own. Whole heap of people make bad mind [negative thinking] take them over, because they try to face it all alone, so be sure to call upon the strength of the father, to help you work for your own. So keep bad mind out of your hearts keep negativity out of your thoughts, I know it is easy to go the wrong way, so Jah Jah protect us every day. Most high bless me yeah, guide and protect me yeah.

Konshens's story focuses on guidance, strength, protection and blessings from Jah which naturalizes the role of Jah as the source of "good" guidance. This story relates good guidance in life to faith in Jah. As a result, ideas of spirituality are naturalized as

primarily associated with Jah and reflects moral strength in Caribbean dancehall culture as embedded in the figure of Jah.

Many dancehall fan participants also shared stories that revealed an ideological frame of spirituality. Such a frame connected comfort to spiritual and religious interests. In this way, participants' discussions of "comfort" were attributed to higher powers that naturalized the influence of faith as an embedded part of their world view.

One example of this came from Peter who told a story of the tragic death of his friend that required a search for comfort through spiritual positions in dancehall lyrics. Peter's story about his quest for spiritual ideals in dancehall songs revealed how such stories served to naturalize the role of spiritual sources of comfort in such times of life:

Two weeks ago, my friend died in a serious accident by the light house and I mean sometimes you play some music like I had a song *There's no Pain in Jah Love*. That song could get you out of anything any troublesome mood. As I say, it's the message of the song, the culture of the song, the beat of the song. It just puts your mind at ease in a kind of way. The message in the song is more or less whatever your going through once you know that you have Jah love, nothing can falter you. You understand? Because there are situations where the whole world is on top of you and you have to remember that any day above ground is a good day. And whereas you may feel like shit you must remember that there is someone in a worst position than you and if they could have the faith to say that everything would be alright then who are you to judge yourself?

Peter's story exemplifies the value in dancehall lyrical stories that reveal concepts that speak on spirituality. Mentioning these messages possessing the ability to get him out of "any troublesome mood" and placing his "mind at ease" from spiritual lyrical stories heard speaks on the normalization of spirituality in Caribbean dancehall culture through members of the culture.

Shawn explained his relationship with God and his association with spiritual ideological frames that has become part of his life. He recalled of a time when he

believed God was using the spiritual concepts in dancehall music to indirectly speak to him. The idea of being relaxed and spoken to through spiritual ideals in dancehall lyrical stories show the embodiment and naturalized affect of these spiritual frames on dancehall listeners:

It has times when I'm just feeling stressed. If I'm going down the road and I hear a song that I haven't heard in a while. A dancehall tune, sometimes I say God is talking to me, he wouldn't talk directly but through a channel. It would have certain things playing out in front of me that you have to read. So I will go down the road and take it just as that, God is talking to me. The words in the song are just relaxing and speak to me; things will get better in time. Your thoughts start to play with you.

Spiritual ideas in dancehall lyrical stories are reified to the point where dancehall fans such as Shawn understand these ideals as naturally occurring that allows them to relate and connect to the lyrics heard naturally. By stating that "God is talking" to him and understanding that such occurrences are expected in way that he can "take it just as that" points to the naturalized effect of spiritual positions in dancehall music and culture.

My own story of the communicative cultural performances I participated and observed also revealed an ideological frame of spirituality. In particular, I viewed and participated with certain patrons who openly acknowledged the disc jockey's selections of popular spiritual songs by using an understood specific hand signal of jabbing one hand in the air while cheering and/or whistling. Popular songs that held spiritual ideologies were then followed by rituals of crowd cheers and the placing of hands up illuminating night skies with cigarette lighters or cell phone lights as a form of participants' spiritual alignment to that was being heard through dancehall music. In addition, other participants appeared to smoke as a form of relaxation and meditation while enjoying the lyrics of spiritual songs being played. Patrons seemed to find comfort,

relaxation and affirmation in spiritual dancehall songs played as some members closed their eyes as a way to focus on the lyrics being heard within the dancehall events. These rituals performed by patrons at dancehall events from this story naturalized ways of being connected with spiritual frames and spirituality in dancehall culture as patrons responded culturally to hearing spiritual messages in similarly understood ways by their actions.

These naturalized understandings revealed through the three ideological frames presented provide insight into the ways that dancehall culture is understood and experienced by its members but further rhetorical analysis allows these same narratives to be assessed according to a single standard: Fisher's test of "good reasons" that provides both "insiders" and "outsiders" with rational understandings of how these stories have come to reveal ideological frames that are naturalized.

### **Good Reasons in Dancehall Ideological Stories**

Dancehall lyrical stories, participant stories about dancehall music and culture, and the embodied communicative cultural performance narratives included in this study both presented and represented powerful cultural norms, values and world views. In particular, naturalized understandings of status, sexual prowess, and spirituality were revealed in the way that all three types of stories were told. This was understood not solely by the themes and topics that emerged from these stories, but from the subsequent actions or embodiment of these ideological frames by dancehall culture members. However, the ability to assess all of these stories using the same criteria is a useful endeavor because it allows for the questioning of how these stories have come to be revealed as being naturalized and apparently a core part of dancehall culture.

Fisher's theory of narrative paradigm suggests that storytelling is inherently human (*homo narrans*), and stories are inherently persuasive in their ability to argue what should be or become in everyday life. These two premises of the narrative paradigm allow "good reason" to be assessed as apparent or absent in all stories that make arguments about what life is and/or should be. Fisher defines "good reasons" as those "elements that provide warrants for accepting or adhering to the advice fostered by any form of communication that can be considered rhetorical" (Fisher, 1987, p.107). These "good reasons" allow us to critically discuss the reasons employed in stories about dancehall music and culture that further reflect and create particular senses of reality.

According to Fisher, a story can be said to employ "good reasons" if it meets the criteria of both *narrative probability* and *narrative fidelity*. *Narrative probability* requires a story to appear as coherent and internally consistent, that is, "what constitutes a coherent story" (Fisher, 1987, p.64). *Narrative fidelity* on the other hand requires a story to be identifiable, relatable and applicable to understandings of everyday life; meaning, "whether or not the stories they experience ring true with stories they know to be true" (Fisher, 1987, p. 64). Such criteria provide an opportunity to judge the basis and grounds of the story (Fisher, 1987). With this theoretical frame, narrative analysis of each individual story in this study can reveal 1) whether or not Fisher's test of "good reasons" concludes that these stories (and corresponding arguments) are "good" or "bad," and 2) how such conclusions have the potential to influence the reception of such stories beyond the confines of the particular culture in which they are employed. These "good reasons" shall be identified (if present) and discussed in all three types of narratives as a way to

further discuss the influence (and potential influence) of these particular ideological frames in (re)producing cultural norms—understood both inside *and* outside the culture.

### Don and Flamboyant Showmanship Good Reasons

Vybez Kartel told a lyrical story about being highly sought after by women because of his appearance, charm and wealth. When applying the criterion of *narrative probability* to his story, I conclude that such an account is both coherent (it follows a pattern of time and interaction that are understood to be commonly experienced in “real life”) and generally understood in the form of a story because it is an internally consistent experience to that of dancehall culture which can be explained in terms of looks, charm and wealth used as tools of attention and attraction. In addition, as it relates to characterological coherence or the believability of characters in a story, Vybez Kartel is known to be a wealthy and lyrically charming individual from his existence as one of dancehall’s most prominently featured dancehall artists. The criterion of *narrative fidelity* also appears in this story as it rings true with experiences typical in dancehall culture. For example in my own life I have used charm and understood the use of charm by others that have successfully resulted in gaining attraction and attention of others in dancehall culture. Fisher’s “good reasons” thus appear within this story, positioning the story to successfully argue that attention and attraction should be gained through the employment of charm, wealth, and flamboyant presentations of self. Thus, the story appears to meet the criteria of “good reasons” as Fisher explains.

Popcaan’s story told of how a person (particularly a man) displays prestige through being able to buy endless alcohol, by wearing fashionable footwear and clothes that allow him to be viewed as attractive, and by being perceived as inspiring fun for

others in dancehall culture. His story appears to meet the criterion of *narrative probability* because by understanding characterological coherence, Popcaan is known as one of the more fashionable artists in dancehall culture. In addition, argumentative coherence is present due to the flow of equating Popcaan's fashion, fame and wealth to reason for attraction in dancehall culture. Popcaan's story also appears to display *narrative fidelity* as his story "ring true" in dancehall culture because of dancehall fans typically want to be around individuals who can create enjoyable and fun atmospheres at dancehall events. For example I personally have spent money to buy drinks for my entourage because it deemed appropriate in creating a great time for myself and others. Thus, Fisher's "good reasons" appear to have been met.

Kim's story talked about how both poor and rich members of dancehall culture attempted to display themselves in flamboyant, "affluent" ways. Her story displayed *narrative probability* as her argument explained coherently the performative ways that material wear and rituals displayed particular ways of understanding in dancehall culture. That is, norms of status allowed those who performed these flamboyant ritualistic ways had the best chance of enjoying the event because they could be easily viewed as attractive and desirable in dancehall culture. As for *narrative fidelity*, Kim described how passionate fans of dancehall music often emphasize looking, acting and being flamboyant when attending dancehall parties. This too, "ring true" as typical of dancehall culture. It further makes sense from my own experience in dancehall culture that values looking stylish as a common part of planning to attend dancehall events to attract and gain attention. Thus, Fisher's "good reasons" in Kim's story appear to have been met.

David also told his story of adopting don and flamboyant interests into his life practices with women. He talked about creating an environment that mimicked those heard through dancehall lyrical stories that subsequently revealed don and flamboyant showmanship ideological frames. As it pertained to *narrative probability*, his story is argumentatively coherent because he argues that it is difficult to have a good time when persons cannot create a fun and enjoyable environment for themselves according to the standard of “fun” that is typically set in dancehall music and culture. David’s explanation of engaging in similar behaviors, like sponsoring drinks for his friends and women he was interested in at dancehall events mimicked the goal of inspiring others around him to enjoy themselves while being recognized for his efforts in such a way that aligned with what the lyrical stories stipulated as well. In this way, *narrative fidelity* also appeared in David’s story because it clearly “rang true” with him and with dancehall cultural norms more generally. Thus, “good reasons” appear to have been met in this story.

I told a story of the ritual performances of men and women that dealt with displaying don and flamboyant ideals at dancehall events to attract, gain attention and be seen as desirable. My account of these rituals displays *narrative probability* by characterological coherence as characters at the two dancehall events all acted in similar ways that made these rituals being performed seem legitimate. In addition, material coherence is present by elements within this story being heard in other stories even within this study of understanding don and flamboyant ideological frames. *Narrative fidelity* “ring true” through my own experiences of dancehall culture, in which such rituals of cultural performances are employed to achieve attention and attraction. As a result, Fisher’s criteria of “good reasons” appear to have been met.

Another story I told dealt with the fashionable dress and material makeup in the form of jewelry worn by patrons at dancehall events as a way of gaining the attention primarily of the opposite sex through flamboyant ideals. This story displays *narrative probability* by demonstrating argumentative coherence; patrons attempting to be viewed as desirable and attractive by others attempt to display fashionable ways in the form of jewelry and dress. *Narrative fidelity* is also understood in such narratives and aligns with my own understandings of dancehall culture as jewelry and fashionable dress wear are often used to ensure being perceived as attractive and to gain attention. For this reason, Fisher's test of "good reasons" appears to have been met.

My final story told of jargon used by men in dancehall events as a way of acknowledging the presence of those who displayed boss like qualities and expressed respect for those presenting high status. *Narrative probability* is displayed through the common norm of acknowledging individuals who perceived to be deserving of acknowledgement for their achievements. In this case, the achievement of being a don as well as being flamboyant, is worthy of acknowledgement. *Narrative fidelity* is also present in this narrative, as the story "ring true" in dancehall culture typically because these actions are common form of behavior. I have also experience being both acknowledged as well as acknowledging others that deserve to be acknowledged in dancehall culture. As a result, Fisher's criteria of "good reasons" appear to have been met.

### Sex, Heterosexuality, and Vulgarly Good Reasons

Vybez Kartel and Indu's dancehall lyrical story focused on the "taking away" of her virginity. The story utilized graphic depictions of having sex in a vulgar and lewd

manner. In terms of *narrative probability*, this story appears coherent in the way that it is reinforced, albeit in different terms, by Indu as the woman talked “about” in the first story. Her second voice confirms Kartel’s account of her pleasure allowing the story to appear as coherent and consistent in both its organization and content. Similarly, *narrative fidelity* appears in this story as the plausibility of reflecting on past sexual encounters. This is not only typical of dancehall musical lyrical stories but was also present in many of the dancehall fan participant narratives as well as my own life experiences. In these ways, Fisher’s “good reasons” appear to have been met.

Mavado’s lyrical story told of a vulgar sexual encounter with a woman in the back seat of a car as a way of naturalizing the places deemed “appropriate” for sexual encounters. Employing *narrative probability* the story appears to be coherent and held together in the way it portrays dancehall cultural understandings of people as sexual in nature and thus capable of enjoying the pleasures of sex and sexual acts in many ways (and places). Mavado’s story still presents his sexual actions as a sexual conquest of a woman, however, which seems to resonate with both dancehall lyrical stories and dancehall fan participant narratives. In this way, Mavado’s story seems to possess *narrative fidelity*, because it “ring true” with the way that sex is portrayed in dancehall culture more generally and in the majority of the stories in this study, in particular. As a result, “good reasons” appear to have been met.

Additionally, Bob’s story revealed an ideological frame of sex, heterosexuality, and vulgarity in the way it portrayed his response to a woman’s sexual advances at a dancehall event. Looking to *narrative probability*, the story appears to be structurally and argumentatively coherent in his explanation of his reaction to sexual advances from

women at a dancehall event; persons often act in such ways and view such actions as being normal in dancehall culture. In terms of *narrative fidelity*, this story portrays an appropriate response to sexual advances during dancehall events that are seen to “ring true” in both dancehall lyrical stories and other dancehall fan narratives as well. In this way, dancing sexually with persons of the opposite sex at dancehall parties is seen as a typical and expectant activity. In this way, “good reasons” in this story appear to have been met.

Similarly, David told a story about how dancehall songs like Vybez Kartel and Indu’s song entitled “Virginity,” serve to inspire remembering nostalgic sexual encounters in one’s own life. This story possesses *narrative probability* because David’s account is coherent; it follows a logic that sex is part of being human and that dancehall culture embraces that part of being human. In this way, the story additionally possesses *narrative fidelity* because the idea of celebrating the human desire to engage in sexual acts is typical of dancehall fans and reflected in both dancehall lyrical stories and dancehall fan participant narratives as well. Therefore, Fisher’s “good reasons” in this story appear to have been met.

I told a story regarding the rituals of sexually stimulating dances by women performed for the viewing and sexual pleasure of men at the two dancehall events I attended. This story displays *narrative probability* through characterological coherence because women throughout both dancehall events were consistent in performing in such ways that legitimized these acts as standard ways of behaving. In addition, material coherence is understood by hearing similar rituals of sexual dance being described through prior participants and lyrical stories in dancehall culture. *Narrative fidelity* also

appeared because the story “rings true” in dancehall culture because sexual dancing rituals are prevalent in every dancehall event I have ever attended. Such actions are deemed as “normal” and valued by members of dancehall culture. For this reason, Fisher’s test of “good reasons” for this particular story seems to have been met.

My final story regarding sex, heterosexual and vulgarity frames talked about women wearing sexually stimulating and revealing outfits particularly for the viewing pleasure of men. Regarding *narrative probability*, the story reveals an argument regarding women who wore sexual revealing clothing to aid in the sexual stimulation of men. This aids with the flow of the story being internally consistent. Characterological coherence was also displayed as most women at these events displayed such revealing outfits, demonstrating it as the norm in dancehall culture. *Narrative fidelity* was displayed in this story through my cultural insights into present day dancehall culture where women usually dress in revealing wear to appear sexy to woo and attract men sexually within dancehall related environments. As a result, Fisher’s “good reasons” for this story appear to have been met.

### Spirituality Good Reasons

In the ideological frame of spirituality, Sizzla told a story of trusting in God (Jah) throughout his life experiences. Sizzla told a story about grounding his faith in Jah in order to keep himself on the “straight and righteous path” to living a virtuous life. In this way, *narrative probability* appeared in his story because his argument aligns positivity and being virtuous with that of guiding spiritual Caribbean understandings and implementing God into one’s life. God is exclusively associated with positivity and good in dancehall music, and in this spirit, *narrative fidelity* also appears in Sizzla’s story

because it “ring true” with the typical description of God (or Jah) and response to such lyrical stories when these songs are played at dancehall events. As such, “good reasons” are evident in this story and appear to have been met.

The second lyrical story, told by Konshens, explains that faith in God (Jah) is required to avoid “straying off course” in life. In life (and culture of dancehall) where “negative” influences abound, Konshens presents Jah as protector, providing direction towards positive and successful life endeavors. In terms of *narrative probability* this story is argumentatively coherent in the way it aligns Jah with the avoidance of negative or evil elements as Jah is celebrated and praised for his good works and positive ideals. In addition, Konshens’s story possesses *narrative fidelity* in the way it “ring true” with what dancehall culture typically displays as “spiritual.” For example, God (or Jah) is all-loving and not vengeful or wrathful, interested in keeping people positive, not in punishing people for their celebration of life. In these ways, “good reasons” appear to have been met.

Peter’s story also revealed an ideological frame of spirituality when he told of his ability to cope with his friend’s death in a car collision through spiritual dancehall songs. His rendition of such songs as able to comfort and aid in his healing process while inspiring gratitude for life were explained as ever-present, even in such troublesome times. Peter’s story possesses *narrative probability* because it argues that a person usually needs to heal and regain composure after tragedy and that such a healing process often focuses on faith and comfort. Similarly, Peter’s story displays *narrative fidelity* because dancehall culture often addresses troubles and tragedies that can be seen as relatable to others both inside and outside dancehall culture. In this way, the story “ring

true” with the act of seeking comfort and refuge through spiritual dancehall music. Thus, “good reasons” appear in this story.

Shawn told his narrative of being stressed and relating what he heard through dancehall spiritual messages as a way of God talking to him indirectly, which then allows him to be relieved by those messages of assurance heard in dancehall music that reveal spiritual concepts. Displaying *narrative probability*, this story is argumentatively coherent by advocating for acceptance of positive messages into one’s own reality that provides assurance. Positive messages typically bring about positive outcomes. *Narrative fidelity* in dancehall culture “ring true” in the way spiritual frames are often used to speak and dictate directions in life in dancehall culture. This is common in Caribbean dancehall culture where members may rely on their faith in God to be assured and aid in making spiritual reliable decisions. As a result, the criteria for the story’s employment of “good reasons” seem to have been met.

I also told a story regarding the ritual performances of patrons at dancehall events who displayed their alignment with spiritual themes heard in the music through their cultural performances of finding comfort and meditation through hand signals and smoking rituals. *Narrative probability* is displayed specifically through characterological coherence when the story revealed that many patrons participated in this ritual that allowed me to conclude that such actions were “normal” ways of behaving in dancehall culture. *Narrative fidelity* appeared in this story because it “rings true” with the general understanding of spiritual ideals as highly promoted and valued in dancehall culture. Because of this, Fisher’s “good reasons” seem to have been met.

The findings presented here reflect a variety of stories and ideological frames as they were revealed. Similarly, analysis of these stories according to Fisher's test of "good reasons" attempted to account for the adherence of rhetorical elements created outside of dancehall culture that allowed stories to be deemed "good" or "bad" apart from the actual adoption by cultural participants and serve as understanding dancehall culture in unique ways. In the following chapter, I go further to discuss these findings as meaningful in particular ways and in relation to particular implications for both understanding ideological frames and narratives as well as a basis for discussing limitations and future directions of this study.

## CHAPTER FOUR: DISCUSSION

One of the primary objectives of this study was to examine dancehall stories using Walter Fisher's narrative paradigm theory, particularly applying his test of "good reasons" to determine how language choices, topics, approaches to logic, and perspective were used persuasively to make arguments in narrative form that give insight into particular cultures. The findings section showed a relationship between these "good reasons" and the ideological frames revealed across these stories that worked to "naturalize" everyday life for dancehall fans and outsiders alike. The first of these ideological frames revealed particular understandings of what it means to be desired and have prestige within dancehall culture (labeled as don and flamboyant showmanship). Fisher's test of "good reasons" concluded that lyrical stories, participant stories, and communicative cultural performances all successfully argued for ways in which don and flamboyant showmanship should be idealized as part of the embedded values of Caribbean dancehall culture. Engaging in both qualitative (interpretive) and narrative (rhetorical) analysis of this data revealed that participants understand cultural norms, as reflected in their own stories and performances of Caribbean dancehall culture as possessing don and flamboyant showmanship characteristics that align with the norms embedded in the dancehall lyrical stories. In this way, "good reasons" were not only idealized in dancehall artists' lyrical stories but also applicable to participants' stories and patrons' performances as well.

The “good reasons” that appeared across these stories were more than just displayed; they actually can be seen to (re)create the cultural norms of dancehall culture both for those who use such stories reasoning in their everyday lives and those who seek to understand the cultural norms of dancehall culture from outside of it. Another aspect of the stories that specific ideological frames attempt to reveal but that “good reasons” may not, is the way that gender roles of men and women and sex (both as a practice and a heterosexual norm) constitute and are constituted by dancehall culture. Systems of meanings that reified ideas of being don and flamboyant set the standard, particularly for men, and defined what it meant to be “manly” in Caribbean dancehall culture. Being a man meant being fashionable in dress wear, confident in ones actions, attractive to others especially women and possessing wealth usually in the form of money. In this way, my findings bring to the forefront the power of stories to (re)shape ideas of masculinity as related to these don and flamboyant frames. It calls into question the predominant voice of these stories and which artists, of which particular genders, are predominantly telling the tales that (re)constitute don and flamboyant showmanship values that consequently shape gender norms in dancehall culture.

Similarly, the ideological frame of sex, heterosexuality and vulgarity also normalized cultural norms that reflect embedded value systems that can be seen to embody these ideals in various ways. Artists’ stories, participants’ stories and communicative cultural performances narratives in dancehall culture produced linguistic and performative recollections about actions seen to be significant to dancehall culture. In this way, stories and sexual encounters were seen as a “natural” part of Caribbean dancehall culture. In some ways, this naturalizing effect attempts to make the same

argument as “good reasons”: stories are “good” when they can resonate with the people whom they are purported to effect. In this case, one can argue that cultural “insiders” may be more prone to accept some of these arguments as “good” while for others “outside” it may not. To be recognized as a sexually open and sexually expressive culture that values and normalizes sex, heterosexuality and vulgar ideals may not rouse support from all people and even be considered taboo in other cultures. Fisher’s “good reasons,” however, still concludes that these stories are “good” but my proximity to dancehall culture causes my assessment of cultural fidelity, in particular, to be different from others. This is important as it allows stories to be “good” primarily *in relation to* particular (types of) people.

Another consequence of using a test of “good reason,” apart from the culture within which such reasons are understood can be seen in how dancehall narratives portrayed gender roles of both men and women. It appears women are valued for their sexually charged advances, their sexual appearances as well as being sexually submissive in their actions while men are valued for the sexually aggressive performances towards women. Rituals of sexually stimulating dances by both genders and revealing outfits by women reified, naturalized and made normal this understanding that was facilitated through stories alongside the rhetorical elements within those stories. Because of this, a relationship between stories that demonstrate “good reasons” as related to sex, heterosexual and vulgar ideals and the adoption of those stories by dancehall listeners is significant.

The final ideological frame of spirituality was revealed in stories and presented as a cultural norm within dancehall culture. These stories were further seen to display “good

reasons” because being comforted, provided with a sense of assurance, and inspiring a feeling of protection was directly tied to an active display of faith in God (or Jah). In particular, the rituals of cheering and singing along with spirituality themed songs, illuminating dark skies with lighters, closing one’s eyes to “feel” spiritual music, and ritually smoking as a form of meditation and relaxation during spiritual songs displayed cultural norms that would not necessarily be seen as appropriately connected by those “outside” dancehall culture. Fisher’s “good reasons,” although apparent, fall short of revealing the complexity of understanding the sexually charged environment of a dancehall event as simultaneously being “spiritual.” Although many “outsiders” may not deem the combination of naturalizing sex and vulgarity in particular ways alongside positive spiritual guidance, dancehall cultural norms seem to indicate that is, indeed, an appropriate and useful combination of cultural practices.

Without prior insight or firsthand experience with Caribbean dancehall culture, I may not have been able to claim that these narratives possessed “good reasons” according to Fisher. However, realizing that although certain ideological frames revealed in these dancehall culture stories could be identified and critically discussed by “outsiders,” it is only in combining both perspectives (alongside both approaches to data analysis) that the complex “reading” of Caribbean dancehall culture that I have attempted to provide here can result. My findings support Fisher’s acclamations of narrative probability and narrative fidelity as associated with specific, contextual, historical and homogenous cultural experiences. In other words, in this particular discussion of Caribbean dancehall culture, my relation to the stories as a researcher privy to dancehall culture *before* I studied it in this context, necessarily positioned me to be capable of novel insights. It

further enabled Fisher's theory to demonstrate how "good" stories may or may not be understood as such without prior understanding of dancehall culture's history, context and specific understandings presented here.

"Good reasons" were not only identified in stories but in the adoption of those stories revealed through dancehall fans performances. Dancehall parties, in this particular case, were the unique sites where dancehall members congregated, performed, and interacted through various rituals, dress and jargon in ways that revealed how they understood particular ideals as represented in the ideological framed values of dancehall culture. Patrons employed various rituals, material makeup of culture in the form of jewelry, dress wear and foot wear alongside jargon to perform in specific ways that were understood by most- if not all- of the patrons at the events. These performances appeared to have displayed "good reasons" as well. For example findings showed that performing in sexual ways and being vulgar resulted in attraction and sexual satisfaction; performing in flamboyant ways and illustrating showmanship resulted in attention, respect, recognition, and confidence; while performing in ways that correlated to spirituality resulted in a sense of assurance, comfort and protection. As a result it could be argued that stories do not only reveal Fisher's "good reasons" and naturalized ideological frames but these theoretical concepts are also applicable, practical and can be seen through the communicative cultural performances that are collectively understood by members of a specific culture. As a result, an argument for a relationship between Fisher's "good reasons" and ideological frames as revealed in communicative cultural performances can reveal how these theoretical concepts are significant in understanding the embodiment and (re)formation of cultural understandings.

Cultural characteristics and understanding of Caribbean dancehall culture were also displayed in these stories. Culture is a continuous process of creating shared meanings, norms and values through language and actions that are socially constructed by dancehall members. Thus, participants as well as dancehall event patrons place perceivable normative value on stories that reveal ideological frames that naturalize the ways shared meaning-making is understood and performed —specifically in relation to status, sexual, and spiritual understandings in dancehall culture. In this way, shared meanings and individual understandings are performed simultaneously in collectively negotiated environments, like dancehall events, as well as apart from them, like in this academic analysis. Such complexity of shared meaning (and meaning making) aids in understanding the (re)presentation of Caribbean dancehall cultural values and norms in various ways.

### **Limitations and Future Directions**

While the narratives in this study were analyzed according to Fisher’s test of “good reasons” as a way to understand dancehall culture, the voices of these stories both in dancehall lyrics and participants’ accounts were predominantly of men. In addition, I am reflective that my own interpretation of these stories is also from my perspective as a man. Due to both an imbalance in participating women (only four women participated in formal interviews) and a lack of included stories featuring women in non-conquest-oriented roles further featured men as lead storytellers. Thus although Fisher’s criteria produced “good reasons,” such a conclusion fails to account for embedded values that reify both men’s and women’s roles in dancehall culture. As a result this study may present an inherent bias in the ways that I have chosen to discuss (and not discuss)

particular issues, topics, and experiences related to sex and gender. It would be useful and valuable to investigate similar stories as they may be told primarily by women (and perhaps to a woman researcher) within dancehall culture to see if they differ in significant ways.

Another direction my study could have gone (but did not) has to do with understanding identity as a main element of understanding culture. However, my analysis did not produce a central focus of the stories used in the study on identity. Future research may be able to address questions of how identity is embedded in this process of sharing (and co-constructing) meaning in dancehall culture.

Additionally, one particularly interesting ideological frame originally identified in my data across the lyrical and participant stories did not appear in the communicative cultural performances I observed. The ideological frame of “black consciousness” appeared as a clear frame for understanding what it is to be black in dancehall culture in both lyrical stories and participant stories that addressed the uniqueness of being black in the Caribbean in particular ways. Although this prevalent topic addressed a constant battle and struggle towards acceptance and success that both dancehall fan participants and dancehall artists expressed, “black consciousness” and “struggles for success” proved to be less suitable for qualitative observation at the two dancehall parties I attended. As a result, I had an interest in exploring this fourth significant ideological frame that emerged about dancehall culture but left it out of the scope of this study because it did not align with the larger approach I chose to take to discuss dancehall culture across various types of texts and from multiple methodological approaches. For future research, I hope to employ a different methodological approach to my data analysis that may allow further

discussion of this specific ideological frame of “black consciousness” in relation to our understandings and experiences with dancehall culture.

Employing qualitative interpretivism and narrative analysis allowed me to make sense of stories about dancehall culture and discuss findings in a particular way. However, other methodological approaches and analyses could be used to understand and interpret data in other unique ways. Theoretical lenses of post colonial theory or critical theory might have revealed a conversation surrounding culture in different directions than the one here.

In this study, dancehall stories and culture were investigated in ways that revealed powerful ideological frames that naturalized ways of understanding norms and values in dancehall culture. In addition, “good reasons” were found in these stories that made evident how these stories revealed ideological frames that appeared to influence dancehall culture in particular ways. It is my hope from this study that scholars and laypersons alike now have a better understanding of the complex processes that go into cultural (re)formations through the power of stories that so many times can be taken for granted as insignificant.

Understanding the consequences dancehall music and culture stories may have by illustrating to “insiders” the naturalizing and reasoning processes that goes into presenting and representing dancehall culture, they may now become more aware to a phenomenon that they may have been unaware of prior and took for granted for what it was. By now being able to critically understand the processes of what they are a part of and how their culture is formed and reformed, they now have been equipped with the agency to assess dancehall culture, decide to continue and accept the culture as usual or

act on this new development to potentially facilitate change in various forms possibly addressing harmful hegemonic formations if any.

For the “outsiders” looking in, having a more comprehensive understanding of “good reasons” and ideological frames revealed in stories through the naturalization of norms and values of dancehall culture allows them to better understand and respect dancehall music cultural formations and reformations through the aid of stories. They may be also equipped to better understanding general cultural formations through powerful stories as well as members’ communicative cultural performances. Outsiders may further be able to grasp the concepts they have learned here and apply it over to their own cultures to understand what they are a part of culturally through the perspective of ideological frames and “good reasons” revealed in stories.

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APPENDIX A

**Interview Guide for In-Person Interviews**

### **Interview Guide for In-Person Interviews**

These questions are intended to prompt volunteer participants in sharing their communication experience and understanding of dancehall music and its lyrics. Breaks and pauses will be included to allow time for confirming with the participant that he or she is comfortable with the interview and its direction. The participant will be encouraged to share experiences at a pace that is comfortable for him or her, and will not be required to answer at any time.

1. What does dancehall music as a type of music mean to you?
2. How long have you been a fan and listener of dancehall music?
3. How would you describe yourself as a fan and listener of dancehall music?
4. What made you like dancehall music originally?
5. What currently attracts you towards dancehall music today?
6. Are there other reason(s) that might affect your choice to listen to dancehall music?
7. When do you listen to dancehall music?
8. Who are some of your favorite dancehall artists/singers?
  - a. Why are these artists among your favorites? How did they become your favorite dancehall artists?
9. Has dancehall music been beneficial to you? If so, how? If not, why not?
10. Can you describe the places and atmospheres where you listen to dancehall music?

11. Could you name some of your favorite dancehall songs?
  - a. Describe what is being sung about in these songs?
  - b. Why would you say these songs are among your favorite? For what reasons?
12. What topics or themes would you say dancehall artists sing about within their music?
13. What topics or theme(s) are the dancehall artists singing about in particular in the dancehall songs that you currently enjoy?
14. Do you think these themes have relevancy in your life? If so, how? If not, why not?
15. How do you associate with dancehall song's lyrics?
16. Are there other song(s) that you particularly identify with?
  - a. Which ones?
  - b. How so?
17. What actions you do normally while listening to dancehall music?
18. How would you describe your feelings and mood when you listen to dancehall songs?
19. How would you characterize dancehall music that you listen to within your life experience?
20. Have you ever made decisions in life that you feel have been affected by listening to dancehall songs and their various messages?

- a. Can you share one? Why did you decide to make such choices?
  - b. If not, why is the music and your life so separate?
21. Do you believe dancehall has the ability to influence persons who listen to it?
- a. How so?
22. Can you give some examples/ detailed description of a couple lyrical stories that you have listened, understood and liked in dancehall music?
23. Why did you enjoy the stories you mentioned?

APPENDIX B

**Informed Consent**



## INFORMED CONSENT

**Study Title: The Impact of What you Listen to: A Communicative Investigation of Dancehall Lyrics and its Narrative Influence toward Listeners.**

**Principal Investigator: Marlon Douglas**

**Co-Investigator: Dr. Erin McClellan**

This consent form is intended to give you the information you will need to understand why this research study is being done and why you are being invited to participate. It will describe what you will need to do to participate as well as address possible inconveniences or discomforts that you may have while participating. Please ask questions at any time. If you would like to participate, you will be asked to sign this form as a record of your agreement to participate and provided with a copy of this form for your records as well.

### ➤ **PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND**

The purpose of this research is to examine the relationship between dancehall music and its listeners. You are being asked to participate because you have identified yourself as a fan and avid listener of dancehall music and are over the age of 20.

### ➤ **PROCEDURES**

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to participate in the following:

- One 30-minute to one hour interview about your perception of dancehall music and its influence.

We will set up a time for you to meet the investigator in Trinidad and Tobago at a location of your convenience to conduct the interview. The interview will be audio-recorded for accuracy.

### ➤ **RISKS**

There are no foreseeable risks associated with participating in this study.

Every possible effort shall be made to protect all participants' information and confidentiality. Please note that you do not have to answer any question(s) that you do not feel comfortable addressing.

In the unlikely event that you feel uncomfortable, you may end participation in this study at any time.

### ➤ **BENEFITS**

Participating in this study carries no material benefits. However, participating in this study may aid in better understanding the relationship between dancehall music

and listeners of dancehall.

➤ **EXTENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY**

Participation in research may involve a loss of privacy; however, your records will be handled as confidentially as possible. After the audiotapes of the interview have been transcribed, the recording will be destroyed. Your name will not be used in any written reports or publications which result from this research. Only the principal and co-investigators will have access to the research data. Data will be kept for three years (per federal regulations) after the study is complete and then destroyed. Activities recorded related to the participant observation session shall not be attributed to specific individuals.

➤ **PARTICIPATION IS VOLUNTARY**

You do not have to be in this study if you do not want to. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw from it at any time without consequences of any kind.

➤ **QUESTIONS**

If you have any questions or concerns about your participation in this study, feel free to contact Marlon Douglas, BSU Graduate Student at 208-703-7082 or Dr. Erin McClellan, Faculty Advisor at 208-426-3365.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Boise State University Institutional Review Board (IRB), which is concerned with the protection of volunteers in research projects. You may reach the board office between 8:00 AM and 5:00 PM, Monday through Friday, by calling (208) 426-5401 or by writing: Institutional Review Board, Office of Research Compliance, Boise State University, 1910 University Dr., Boise, ID 83725-1138.

**DOCUMENTATION OF CONSENT**

I have read this form and decided that I will participate in the project described above. Its general purposes, the particulars of involvement and possible risks have been explained to my satisfaction. I understand I can withdraw at any time.

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**Printed Name** of Study Participant

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**Signature** of Study Participant

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Date

---

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

---

Date

APPENDIX C

**Recruitment Email Script**

## Recruitment Email Script

*[If someone I am approaching directly]:*

Hello (name of potential participant).

My name is Marlon and I'm a student at Boise State University [in the United States] doing a research project on dancehall music. I was wondering if you would be willing to talk to me about what you think about dancehall music? Our talk shouldn't take more than an hour. And if you need extra time to think it over before you commit, that's fine, too.

Please reply at your convenience and let me know if you would be willing to help me with my project. I will be here through early July and would love to schedule a time to talk that would work for you. Please feel free to also call me on my phone at [phone number] if you would like to talk further about my project at any time. I hope to hear from you soon!

*[If snowball method referral]:*

Hello (name of potential participant).

My name is Marlon and I'm a student at Boise State University [in the United States] doing a research project on dancehall music. Someone else I talked to said that you love listening to dancehall and would be a great person to talk to. I was wondering if you would be willing to talk to me about what you think about dancehall music? Our talk shouldn't take more than an hour. And if you need extra time to think it over before you commit, that's fine, too.

Please reply at your convenience and let me know if you would be willing to help me with my project. I will be here through early July and would love to schedule a time to talk that would work for you. Please feel free to also call me on my phone at [phone number] if you would like to talk further about my project at any time. I hope to hear from you soon!

Marlon

APPENDIX D

**Face to Face Script**

## Face to Face Script

*[If someone I am approaching directly]:* Hi (name of potential participant). My name is Marlon and I'm a student at Boise State University [in the United States] doing a research project on dancehall music. I was wondering if you would be willing to talk to me about what you think about dancehall music? Our talk shouldn't take more than an hour. And if you need extra time to think it over before you commit, that's fine, too.

If "yes" – schedule a time and place of mutual convenience for researcher and participant. Thanks so much for participating – I look forward to talking more with you very soon!

If "I need to think about it" – Feel free to call or text me on my phone at [phone number] if you want to talk further or schedule a time to chat more. I hope to hear from you soon!

*[If snowball method referral]:* Hi (name of potential participant). My name is Marlon and I'm a student at Boise State University [in the United States] doing a research project on dancehall music. Someone else I talked to said that you love listening to dancehall and would be a great person to talk to. I was wondering if you would be willing to talk to me about what you think about dancehall music? Our talk shouldn't take more than an hour. And if you need extra time to think it over, that's fine, too.

If "yes" – schedule a time and place of mutual convenience for researcher and participant. Thanks so much for participating – I look forward to talking more with you very soon!

If "I need to think about it" – Feel free to call or text me on my phone at [phone number] if you want to talk further or schedule a time to chat more. I hope to hear from you soon!

APPENDIX E

**IRB Approval Letter**

**DATE:** April 24, 2012

**TO:** Marlon Douglas (PI)  
Dr. Erin McClellan (co-PI)

**FROM:** Institutional Review Board (IRB)  
Office of Research Compliance

**SUBJECT:** IRB Notification of Approval  
Project Title: *The Impact of What You Listen To: A Communicative Investigation of Dancehall Lyrics and its Narrative Influence toward Listeners*

The Boise State University IRB has approved your protocol application. Your protocol is in compliance with this institution's Federal Wide Assurance (#0000097) and the DHHS Regulations for the Protection of Human Subjects (45 CFR 46).

<b>Review Type:</b> Expedited	<b>Approval Number:</b> 187-SB12-026
<b>Date of Approval:</b> April 24, 2012	<b>Expiration Date:</b> April 23, 2013

**Your approval is effective for 12 months.** If your research is not finished within the allotted year, the protocol must be renewed before expiration date indicated above. The Office of Research Compliance will send a reminder notice approximately 30 days prior to the expiration date. The principal investigator has the primary responsibility to ensure a RENEWAL FORM is submitted in a timely manner. If the protocol is not renewed before the expiration date, a new protocol application must be submitted for IRB review and approval.

Under BSU regulations, each protocol has a three-year life cycle and is allowed two annual renewals. If your research is not complete by April 23, 2015, a new protocol application must be submitted.

All additions or changes to your approved protocol must also be brought to the attention of the IRB for review and approval before they occur. Complete and submit a MODIFICATION/AMENDMENT FORM indicating any changes to your project. When your research is complete or discontinued, please submit a FINAL REPORT FORM. An executive summary or other documents with the results of the research may be included.

All relevant forms are available online. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Office of Research Compliance, 426-5401 or [HumanSubjects@boisestate.edu](mailto:HumanSubjects@boisestate.edu).

Thank you and good luck with your research.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary E. Pritchard". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

**Dr. Mary E. Pritchard**

Chairperson

Boise State University Institutional Review Board