



Party Girls Don't Get Hurt (?) Loving and Fearing the Party Scene and Nightlife in Kingston, Jamaica

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Abstract

The aim of this contribution is to share my experience as a woman doing research at street parties in Kingston, Jamaica. I will talk about how I faced the challenge of going out at night and going to parties, going deeper into my recent fieldwork experience in Jamaica during the summer of 2023. I am not willing to say that street parties in Kingston are dangerous or impossible for women to enjoy. Although I love nightlife and party scenes, I have felt this sensation of danger and insecurity in all the cities and countries where I have been partying. It is not about the place; it is about the fact of being a woman exposed to different unpleasant situations in the party scene and the nightlife.

When I encountered myself in Kingston ready to start my fieldwork, I was excited and happy to be able to experience the dancehall parties in person, but the fear of going to the streets alone in the night overshadowed the situation. I was scared and overwhelmed about what could happen to me in a country where I knew nobody, where I did not know whom to call, where to go, or how to proceed if something dangerous happened.

Drawn from my own experience, when hanging out alone in the night as a woman, you are exposed to harassment and indiscreet proposals and considered as an easy target to approach. Maybe a question that the reader would ask at this moment is, "Why not look

for a safer fieldwork place where you do not have to hang out alone at night?" I totally understand it, but the question should be, "What is happening in our society that allows for behaviours which make women feel insecure in the streets?"

My aim with this text is not to answer those questions, but to show how I could navigate those fears, finding creative solutions to them; how I was able to build a support system in Kingston with the local and international dancehall community and virtually with my beloved ones: my boyfriend, my classmates, and my close friends. I will describe how I went from feeling alone and scared to feeling safe and cared for at the parties and in many other spaces of Kingston. Also, I aim to explain how these changes were reflected in the way I used my moving and dancing body to interact with the people and the whole environment.

Keywords: fieldwork, dancehall, Jamaica, security in fieldwork, anthropology of dance, support system

Introduction

In this account, I will reflect on how I managed to stay safe and protect my body while conducting fieldwork at dancehall parties in Jamaica during the summer of 2023. My intention is not to suggest that Jamaica is a dangerous place.¹ Instead, I aim to share my personal

1. I had the chance to talk to different people, both men and women, who had been to Jamaica before. I asked them for recommendations and their impressions of the island. I wanted to know about budget, activities to do, and how to get around the country. The general advice I received was not to walk alone on the streets during the day or night and to avoid using public transportation like buses or taxis that are hailed from the street because of the frequent street robberies that happen mainly to foreigners, but also to locals. Additionally, I was told about the street harassment that women experience, regardless of whether they are local or foreign. When I arrived in Jamaica, many locals confirmed these recommendations. As I was staying in a guest house with plenty of locals, they advised me to ask for help if I needed to walk somewhere. One of the locals would walk with me. Also, I was catcalled many times during my stay in Jamaica; while I was shopping, at the entrance of party venues, and at the beach, among other places. As I will explain in the following lines, the best way to avoid these situations is to stay close to the locals and be surrounded by big groups of people who would protect each other if any instances of harassment or catcalling occur.

experience of overcoming my fears by creating a support system of both virtual and in-person connections. This allowed me to enjoy the vibrant dancehall culture of Jamaica while feeling safe and protected.

Why Dancehall Parties in Kingston?

Currently, I am an MA student of Anthropology of Dance. As part of the course, we could go to any country in the world to conduct a research project focused on Anthropology of Dance and Ethnochoreology. I chose Jamaica, as I have been a dancehall lover for as long as I can remember. I am also a dancehall student and enthusiast for more than eight years. I always wanted to have the chance to go to Jamaica and to have the opportunity to research dancehall.

Dancehall is a music genre and a popular cultural expression that comes from Jamaica, a country in the Caribbean. This phenomenon started around the 1960s. About the etymology of the word "dancehall," it can be said that it is related to the exercise of dancing in a hall, the place where the party takes place in Jamaica. Dancehall can be described as a dance genre that reflects the daily life and the mindset of people from the ghettos in Jamaica (Hope, 2006). When I am referring to daily life, it can be, for instance, how they put into movement what they see in their daily life. As Grau (2007, p. 193) suggests, dance is always in the making, and is a manner to embody our cultures, histories, and the involvement of human beings in society. For example, there are dancehall movements that represent the daily life gestures in the house such as wearing a pant, sweeping, zipping up a jacket, and ways of transportation, such as riding a motorcycle or riding a boat.

Technically describing how the body moves when dancing dancehall, it follows a constant downward bouncing (Fügedi, 2016, p. 73) that can be strongly or smoothly accentuated and is generally, but not exclusively, danced with music that is considered dancehall as well.

Certain moves can be performed by both males and females in dancehall, but some are exclusively for females. These moves are known as "dancehall female moves". The primary difference lies in

how men and women move their hips or the waistline. On the one hand, men are allowed to move their hips by pressing them forward or by drawing an infinite line with them. On the other hand, besides what was mentioned before, they can perform a complete rotation of their hips, releasing them fully to the back. That last move is best known in dancehall as “whine”. This kind of movement has its roots in traditional folk dances where fertility dances were performed. Men usually move their hips towards the women’s buttocks, while women move their hips towards the men’s pelvises.



Video footage by the author at a dancehall party in Kingston, Jamaica. This is an example of how spontaneous and energetic those parties can be. This scene represents couples of males and females performing “dagga,” a way to dance dancehall that consists of a man dancing behind a woman tied to her buttocks. Also, some females dance alone doing dancehall female moves. For the full video, visit the online journal at <https://journals.publishing.umich.edu/conversations/>.

Academic scholarship has primarily examined dancehall through the lenses of ethnomusicology (Cooper, 2004) and cultural studies (Stanley-Niaah, 2010). Additionally, there has been research on

how individuals navigate and express Jamaica's dominant social hierarchies and inequalities through dancehall (Hope, 2006, p. 18). However, these studies have primarily focused on this dance as a phenomenon solely experienced at parties, where music is the primary subject of analysis and dance is viewed as a byproduct of the music.

It is also important to dedicate ethnographic attention to the analysis of dance, as it is a powerful symbol that cannot be reduced to any other form of human activity. It transmits feelings that cannot be verbally expressed (Giurchescu, 2001). However, most of the literature available in the anthropology of dance is related to traditional dances (Wulff, 2015). The importance of this study must be considered, as previous anthropological investigations have neglected the various spaces in which dancehall is experienced by dancers, including parties, dance classes and competitions.

I conducted ethnographic research focusing on the embodied experience and physical expression of Jamaican dancehall dancers. I aimed to investigate how they use movement to express themselves and navigate their everyday lives. I also wanted to analyse the intersection of gender roles, social hierarchies and inequalities within the dancehall community. I focused mainly on two spaces where dancehall is experienced through dance: parties and classes. However, there are more spaces where dancehall is experienced through dance, such as competitions, branding or partnerships with the music industry (official videos and song promotions).

During the summer of 2023, I conducted two-month fieldwork in which I participated in 20 dance classes with both male and female dancers, and attended 27 dancehall parties. I conducted interviews, had informal conversations, and observed the activities related to dancehall culture. Apart from interacting with Jamaican dancers, I also talked to locals and foreign dancers who came to Jamaica to learn dancehall. I stayed at Belleh23, a guesthouse well-known for accommodating people interested in exploring dancehall through dance. The staff at the guesthouse were extremely helpful in connecting

me with dancehall dancers, providing dance rooms for classes, and arranging transportation for me to attend nighttime dancehall parties in Kingston throughout the week.

This reflective account does not cover my entire research experience but focuses on my experience with safety issues during my fieldwork. In this text, I will share excerpts from my field notes that illustrate how I coped emotionally while in the field, as well as my reflections on my thoughts and feelings after completing my fieldwork. This text was written after taking some time to distance myself from my initial impressions.

Where Everything Started

Wow, I'm so excited! It's finally time to head out and experience the legendary dancehall parties in Kingston, Jamaica. I have been waiting for this night since always. I cannot believe that I am finally in the land where dancehall was born. I am ready to have the time of my life. Let's do it! However, I am a bit concerned because I don't have anyone to go with, and I don't know any safe drivers who can take me there. Additionally, I don't know anyone here who can keep an eye on me and ensure that I arrive home safely (Field notes, 30 June 2023).

When I arrived Kingston to begin my fieldwork and it was time to go to a party, I felt a mixture of excitement and happiness about experiencing the dancehall parties in person. However, this was overshadowed by my fear of going out alone at night. I was scared and overwhelmed by what might have happened. Before travelling to Jamaica, I talked to a few dancers who had already been there to learn dancehall and had frequented the places I was interested in. They suggested that I should not go out alone, especially at night, as I would be exposed to common crime and catcalling. When I arrived to Kingston, the locals also recommended to not go out by myself walking or with a non-reliable transport service because it could be dangerous.

Despite the Fear, I was Fulfilling My Dream

Maybe it's best to change my plans and not go to any parties, at least until I meet someone. Although attending parties is extremely important to my research, I can avoid it. Nowadays, dancehall isn't just about partying, right? ...No, no, no, no. I can't give up that easy. I must find some way to go to parties safely. What should I do? (Field notes, 30 June 2023).

I decided to get in touch with Angel, a professional dancer and teacher from Czechia who was in Jamaica at that time. I found out she was in Kingston too through the social media page of a Jamaican dancer I follow. A lot of women travel to Jamaica to learn dancehall. They stay for a couple of weeks or even longer to take dance classes and participate in parties. I reached out to her via Instagram and explained my situation. She turned out to be one of my first guides into the local party scene. She responded with kindness from the very beginning and allowed me to go with her to the party. She mentioned that she understands the feeling of fear of not knowing a place and going out alone in the middle of the night.

Fortunately, I had resolved one of my concerns: not being alone at the party. However, I had no other option but to travel alone from my accommodation to the party venue. Nonetheless, I decided to make the necessary preparations to attend the event. The dancehall parties usually start after midnight, so I began getting ready at around 11. I had dinner, took a shower, and began selecting my outfit for the night. I settled on an oversized shirt and loose-fitting shorts in natural colors, without any makeup and with my hair in the same bun I had all day. At the time, I believed my outfit choice was random, but upon reflecting on the events, I realized that I dressed in a way that would not draw attention to myself and would keep me safe.

Based on my experiences with parties and everyday life, I have noticed that wearing bright colors for clothes, makeup, and hair tends to grab the attention of both males and females. This dressing style works even when I am just going to the store around the corner or

when I attend a party at night. When I want to avoid drawing attention, I try to dress in oversized clothing with neutral colors to avoid standing out. At least at first glance, I feel less likely to attract attention due to my appearance.

Oversized clothing is my go-to outfit for comfort, even when I am at home. As I was going to be in an uncomfortable situation due to the whole new experience, I wanted to wear something that would make me feel as comfortable as possible. There are many variables at play here, as I am a professional dancer and also feel comfortable in shiny, bright-coloured clothing, with strong makeup and styled hair. However, it ultimately came down to my mood that day.

My outfit choice was not based only on thinking about calling unwanted attention from men. Unfortunately, despite the fact that what a woman is wearing is not a valid argument at all to justify sexual harassment, I have experienced it regardless of the kind of clothes I am wearing, or if I am showing or not my skin, or my curves with my outfit.

It's already 1:00 a.m., and I've been trying to get a ride for over half an hour without success. I wonder if it's a sign that I shouldn't go out tonight, but I'm going to try it one more time. Finally, I was able to book a cab service! It feels great to know that someone is waiting for me at the party I'm headed to, especially since it's the woman I talked to earlier.

I get in the cab, and we drive to the place. I've been in Jamaica for less than forty-eight hours; everything is still new. I want to know this place I am in, and I wish I knew how to get to the place we are going with the driver. My heart is racing, I'm breaking out in a cold sweat and I'm panicking. Imagine: breaking out in a cold sweat in the Caribbean, at over 35 degrees Celsius. The sense of fear was real. Luckily, I made it to the party okay. As I stepped into the venue, my eyes caught the sight of Angel, the woman I had spoken to earlier. Her warm smile and gentle hug, accompanied by her kind words, "Nice to meet you, I'm happy you arrived safe," made me feel

like my soul had returned to my body. I could finally breathe in peace again (Field notes, 30 June 2023).

As I approached the party, music blared, and the bass vibrated through the windows of the car and my body. I love the feeling of being enveloped in music at parties. However, at that moment, even that loud sound made me feel scared and disoriented.

I felt too shy and uncertain to engage in any activities. I remained in the same spot for most of the night, as if my feet were stuck to the floor. I barely danced, avoided eye contact, and did not express much excitement. I thought that if I kept a low profile, I would be less likely to attract unwanted attention. Even though many people were openly using their cell phones to record videos or take photos, I felt hesitant to do the same. However, I still made a few videos that night to have a visual memory of the experience.



Video footage by the author at Uptown Mondays dancehall party (June 30, 2023), the most iconic dancehall party still existing nowadays in Kingston, Jamaica. The sound is not very clear, but is also a sign of how loud the music was. The feeling in my ears was similar. A little bit painful, but still enjoyable and enveloping. For the full video, visit the online journal at <https://journals.publishing.umich.edu/conversations/>.

After spending some time there, I began to feel calmer and decided to enjoy myself. The unfamiliar started to be a little bit more familiar to me. I was surrounded by Angel and her friends; they were, all the time, very kind to me, and were aware of my well-being. It helped me to feel accompanied and safe. Also, after spending a couple of hours at the party, I started to recognize its dynamics. I have seen plenty of videos via Instagram and YouTube of those parties, but witnessing them live is another experience. I started to recognize dancers I follow a long time ago and saw them dancing lots of my favorite moves and dance routines that are particular to specific songs. I wanted to join them and enjoy myself, but I did not know if it was good. They did not know me, so I did not know if it could be disrespectful. However, I started to understand that copying their moves and joining their dance was not a problem. It is part of the soul of dancehall: to join people and share energy through dance. I slowly started to move and dance a little. I did not do full-out or very big moves, but started to let the bounce get into my body and smile.

This is not a minor situation. That day was full of emotions because, despite all the fear about hanging out alone during the night in an unfamiliar country, I was, at the same time, making a dream come true: attending the epic Jamaican dancehall parties in Kingston. It was up to me to make the most of it. I had an intense and enjoyable experience that moved me to tears.

I have been a dancehall dancer and lover since I was a child. I have studied dancehall with local instructors back in Colombia, my home country. I had the chance to take some online classes with Jamaican dancers. As a dancehall enthusiast, it was a dream come true to attend this event. I had been longing to be there for years, and finally, my dream came true.

Although my purpose for being there was research-related, my love for dancehall culture motivated me to undertake this project. Seeing the dancers in person, whom I had only seen in videos before, was an incredible feeling. Being in such proximity to them and seeing their vigor as they danced to the music was an unforgettable experience.



Video footage by the author at Uptown Mondays dancehall party (June 30, 2023), the most iconic dancehall party still existing nowadays in Kingston, Jamaica. This is an epic scene from this party. This balcony is used for well-known dancers to go up and dance their moves to iconic songs of the moment. It was a dream come true for me to experience that personally. Also, looking back, most of them are nowadays my friends. For the full video, visit the online journal at <https://journals.publishing.umich.edu/conversations/>.

Although I felt more relaxed as time passed by at the party, I found it difficult to physically express all the emotions I was feeling. When I am in a familiar environment with people I trust, I tend to scream, jump, and dance with joy because I am happy and excited. However, being in an unfamiliar place made my body freeze up a bit. It was an overwhelming experience filled with happiness, uncertainty, fear, anxiety, and ecstasy. So many things were happening at the same time inside me, but my body could only express fear and anxiety by not moving much.

When the party was over, Angel asked me if I was able to have a ride to get back to the hostel. I had planned to call a cab, but she offered to share her hired and trusted driver who always took them to parties and took them back home. As I said before, she was a big help and support for me that night. After dropping them off at their place, the driver and I continued driving for another 15 minutes until we arrived to my accommodation.

Even though Angel assured me that her driver was trustworthy, I was still apprehensive about being alone with him. I felt unsure if I would arrive home safely, but thankfully, I did. I went to bed that night with mixed emotions: happy to have finally fulfilled one of my dreams, but also feeling anxious and exhausted due to the stress I had undergone. Despite my initial apprehension, everything turned out to be successful.

Will I Come Back to the Party?

I must confess that I stopped attending the parties for a few days. Even though I had a good time watching my favorite dancers perform live, it did not seem rational to endure the amount of stress and anxiety related to my safety again. I often thought about eliminating the plan to go to parties as part of my fieldwork. Yes, it was an option to ignore the potential impact of that risk on me, but that would be the easy way out. I decided to keep stepping out of my comfort zone and to find ways to face this challenge. I built a strong support network with the people I interacted with face-to-face and my loved ones via social media.

Maintaining contact with loved ones while carrying out fieldwork was crucial to me, and my virtual support system made it possible. Knowing that someone was waiting for me on the other side of the screen gave me peace of mind and helped me feel less isolated. My boyfriend was especially supportive, always willing to lend an ear and provide helpful solutions whenever I faced any challenges. For instance, I was constantly in contact with him via chat or video call and told him everything that happened to me during the day and how I felt. Verbalizing how I was feeling and his advice on what I could do to take care of myself helped me to step back from my emotions and think clearly about what I could do next. He assisted me in finding different strategies to feel more comfortable and safer when attending parties. Sharing my experiences with him was therapeutic, giving me a safe outlet to express my feelings and emotions. Additionally, I kept my close friends updated on my whereabouts by sharing my location with them. This way, there would be a record of my movements in case of an emergency.

It took me some time to understand that the dangerous encounters would not necessarily happen at the party venue, but rather during the journey to and from the party. Although I could feel safe while at the party itself, I realised that I needed to find solutions to ensure that I could arrive safely at the party and return home safely as well. If I did not take these precautions, the feeling of anxiety would linger with me even during the party itself.

When it came to face-to-face interactions, I decided to move to a hostel where more people were interested in going to dancehall parties. This way, I could go to and return from the party with a group. Changing my accommodation turned out to be a smart choice. The new place had over 20 people who went to parties every day, including local dancers. We could go to the party together and look out for each other.

Interacting with people from various local and foreign communities in different environments, such as dance classes, the beach, the pool and lunchtime, was highly beneficial for me personally and professionally. It helped me to build strong bonds of community and care with them. As many of these individuals also attended parties, we often accompanied or greeted each other at the venue.

During my stay at a guesthouse that was specifically intended to dancehall enthusiasts, I had the opportunity to become acquainted with the local community. I discovered that Jamaicans are incredibly welcoming and enjoy conversing and sharing experiences. The more I spent time with local and foreign dancers, the more I was invited to participate in activities besides parties. For example, Latonya Style, a well-known Jamaican dancehall dancer with over 20 years of experience in the scene, frequently invited me to attend events such as street parties, beach outings, or dinners. This allowed me to get to know her beyond just being my dancehall instructor and allowed us to form a meaningful friendship.

I have had the opportunity to attend dance classes in Jamaica with various foreign dancers whom I already knew. These dancers would invite me to join their classes with different Jamaican teachers. Although

I enjoyed my private classes, it was a nice experience to share dance lessons with different dancers and see how the dancehall teachers interacted with a broader group of students. Additionally, these dancers would invite me to attend parties with them, or I could ask to join them.

It may seem unbelievable, but sharing a love for dancehall automatically makes you a part of the dancehall community, regardless of whether you are a local or a foreigner. By attending the same events such as parties, classes, and trips to the nature, we become friends without needing to know much about each other. Dancehall is why we are all in Jamaica and our way of connecting with others. It was an incredible experience both personally and as a researcher. We were staying together in the same hostel, and we often shared our experiences at parties, dance events, and during our daily interactions such as going to the pool or having meals at the hostel. Since we were staying in the same house and shared common areas like the bathroom, kitchen, living room, and dance classrooms, we spent a lot of time together throughout the day.

It was also helpful to have connections at the parties, such as the DJ, photographers, and food vendors. Once I became a familiar face, I received many greetings and smiles throughout the night. Moreover, the locals were always ready to help in case of any problem.

One night, at the end of a party, while waiting for a cab with some friends, some drunk men started harassing us. However, a street food vendor noticed what was happening and called us to come near his place. He instructed us to stay close to him until our driver arrived. The men stopped bothering us when they saw us talking to the food vendor.

Since I started to understand how parties work, I changed the way I took care of myself. I used to believe that remaining unnoticed was the safest option. However, I realized that I am more likely to receive help from others if they already know me. Interacting kindly with others results in receiving kindness in return. As time passed, I grew more comfortable dancing at the party. I began to express my emotions when I saw people dancing, recorded videos with my cell phone, and even interacted with dancers I did not know, but with whom I wanted

to dance. Initially, I was hesitant to be captured by the video camera, but later, I was willing to pose. The photographer would recognize me and greet me kindly.

Blooming in Kingston: The Happy Ending

Suddenly, I realized that I had less than a week left in Kingston. The countdown to my departure had begun and I was already feeling nostalgic. I will miss the dancehall parties, the music that made my body move, the company of my friends and watching them dance. Today is a special day, a party day. I want to celebrate, so I decided to wear a pink bodysuit that is tight to my body and a pair of short black shorts that are incredibly comfortable. It's so hot outside, I prefer to wear my hair up to keep myself cooler. I will make a high ponytail and put some gel on it to make it look perfect. I also feel like doing my makeup today. I think I will try bright and dramatic pink eyeliner, lots of blush and highlighter, and red lipstick. I love wearing red lipstick because it makes me feel powerful and sexy (Field Notes, 16 August 2023).

On that day, I went out with my group of friends, which consisted of more than 10 girls who were staying at the same hostel as me and with whom had already been attending parties together. I had the pleasure of meeting several people I knew, and it felt great to catch up with them. I experienced a great sense of comfort and security and I did not feel the need to shy away from the camera or the photographer. I was happy to pose for some pictures. I danced with strangers who had become friends lately and enjoyed myself thoroughly.

However, there was a moment at the party when a man approached me in a manner that made me feel uncomfortable, but my friends were there to protect me. Two of them went closer to me and positioned themselves in a way that protected me from the man. Fortunately, the person left, and we continued to enjoy the party. I bring up this example to clarify that there were times when the atmosphere could

be tense, but I found safety through mutual support from my friends. Nonetheless, most of the time, people were happy, dancing, enjoying the party together and respecting each other. This is what dancehall parties are all about: unity, happiness, and joy.

Dancing in the middle of the dancefloor felt cathartic, and I did not mind people watching me. I took numerous photos and videos and interacted with whoever I wanted without any fear or hesitation. Looking back, I realize that my confidence and feeling of safety at parties were evident in my body language—the way I walked, stood still, and danced with others. The feeling of being able to express my amazement and gratitude for being at the parties from day one was extremely liberating. The feeling of awe and euphoria of witnessing Jamaican parties in person was always the same, but my ability to express these emotions through my body improved. When I left my fear and anguish behind, I was able to dance and move my body freely, smile at people, and verbally express my admiration for someone's dancing or dressing style.



Video footage by the author at Leggo di Streets, one of the longstanding dancehall parties in Kingston, Jamaica. That night I danced in the middle of the dancefloor and was able to interact with new dancers. I knew my friends had my back and kept an eye on me, so I would feel safe to interact with strangers and enjoy the party. But not all of them were strangers, I also danced with lots of friends there. In this footage can be seen how the proximity is now with the dancers. I was very close to them in comparison with the video of my first party. For the full video, visit the online journal at <https://journals.publishing.umich.edu/conversations/>.

As a researcher and a passionate dancehall dancer in the dancehall community, I believe that expressing myself physically and processing my emotions through body movement is an insightful way to connect with others in this party context. The Jamaican dancers and non-dancers I interacted with are highly attuned to their environment and able to read moods through body language. It was important to me that they could feel my energy and joy at the party. While it was not mandatory, it was only fair to them that I shared my enthusiasm and passion for dancehall.

Despite having the support of those around me, I maintained virtual communication with my close circle. Sharing my feelings and experiences with them and receiving their support from a distance proved to be essential in helping me navigate my fieldwork at dancehall parties in Kingston.

Conclusion

After spending over two months in Jamaica and attending more than 27 parties, I am proud to say that I achieved my goal of experiencing and enjoying the legendary dancehall parties first-hand. Regardless of receiving advice from my professors many times to change my fieldwork country or not include parties as an important space for my research, I chose to persevere. It was the best decision to take the risk and challenge of attending these events from my very first days on the island.

Notwithstanding facing obstacles and personal difficulties, I never abandoned my anthropological craft. From the very beginning, I was able to take field notes and rigorously document my experience, despite the fear and anxiety about what might have happened to me. The amazing sight of skilled dancers sharing and enjoying their talents inspired me to keep searching for innovative solutions and to attend dancehall parties regularly. The positive and hectic energy that comes with the parties was worth every effort I made to keep going while

I was on the island. There is a lot to learn and document from the dancehall culture in Jamaica.

During my time there I gained a deeper understanding of female dancehall dancers and dancehall culture. I had a very enriching experience during my research trip to Jamaica. In order to become a part of the community, I made an effort to meet and engage with both locals and foreigners through everyday life activities. Although I arrived to Jamaica knowing nobody, I left the country with insightful fieldwork material and many new friends. As a female researcher who loves nightlife, I also learned how to better handle risks while conducting fieldwork. If I get the opportunity to do fieldwork in Jamaica again, I will be better equipped to handle situations that previously made me feel insecure. Additionally, suppose I am tasked with conducting fieldwork in a new location. In that case, I will take the time to research and understand the dynamics of the place and determine how to navigate local areas safely, as well as appeal to my relatives even if they are not physically with me, because they will help to think about solutions to feel safe and will listen to my feelings.

However, this experience was not just about learning about a new culture. It also taught me a lot about myself. I discovered my strength, determination and fearlessness when I set my mind to something. I took a risk and stepped out of my comfort zone doing things I did not think were possible. For instance, I hung out at midnight at street parties in a foreign country where I did not know anybody. Overall, this experience allowed me to get to know myself better and become a better version of myself.

I often draw from my personal experience when discussing the changes and improvements I have made as a researcher in this text. To me, my persona and my identity as a researcher are intertwined, especially because, as I have mentioned before, how special and important it was for me to be in Jamaica learning about dancehall. During my research, I gave it my all, dancing and sharing as much as I could, and always being true to myself. My journey in Jamaica

was both a personal and professional challenge, requiring me to be intensely focused.

I believe it is essential to discuss the topic of risk management while conducting research. During my bachelor's and master's degrees studies in Anthropology, my professors taught me to do whatever it takes to be accepted in the community and gain access to information. As researchers, we rely heavily on people to conduct our research. Nevertheless, I consider there is insufficient emphasis or space to discuss safety concerns. As anthropologists, our research tool is our own bodies. However, there are not many discussions about how to take care of it. It is critical to consider how to maintain our physical and emotional well-being while conducting fieldwork. Therefore, after giving it much thought, it becomes necessary to talk about these topics.

Finally, I want to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to all the amazing people I met during my stay in Jamaica—from the local dancers, teachers, and friends who welcomed me with open arms into their beautiful island and hearts to the incredible foreign dancers from Europe, Latin America, and Asia, with whom I was able to connect. Our shared love and passion for dancehall brought us together and created unforgettable moments both on and off the dance floor. I am truly grateful to all of them for being my support system and biggest inspiration during my time in Jamaica. I would also like to thank my close friends and my boyfriend for their unwavering support even from miles away. Without them, I would not have been able to fulfill my dream of visiting Jamaica and conducting research there. Thank you all for making this experience possible.

Author Biography

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