Author's response to reviews

**Title:** HIV/AIDS in Trinidad: A Dilemma for Religious Groups

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**Author's response to reviews:** see over
**Authors’ Corrections and Response to Reviewer’s Report**

**Reviewer:** Lisa Norman  
**Title:** HIV/AIDS in Trinidad: A Dilemma for Religious Groups  
**Version:** 2 Date June 15, 2005

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**Major Compulsory Revisions**  
Are the methods appropriate and well described, and are sufficient details provided to replicate the work?  
1. The methods section is extremely weak and inadequate. There is not enough information presented such that a researcher could replicate the study. Some examples of inadequacies:

a. How were the representatives identified? How were they approached?  
   **See Methods:** according to the IRB-approved methods of Brathwaite (2001); potential representatives were called and interviews were scheduled by interviewer.

b. What about issues related to informed consent? How was informed consent obtained (or was it)?  
   **See Methods:** informed consent was obtained verbally by all participants, who willingly agreed to be audio-recorded.

c. What was the time frame used for data collection?  
   **See Methods:** November 2002 through April 2003

d. How were the 10 respective religions chosen?  
   **See Methods:** Modeled after the method of Brathwaite (2001)

e. How was the interview instrument developed? What information/research informed the development of this instrument?  
   **See Methods:** Based on the CAREC IRB-approved method of Brathwaite (2001)

f. Was the interview instrument approved by IRB?  
   **See Methods:** retro-active IRB approval is pending. The research methods used were modeled after a similar 2001 study by Brathwaite, and those methods were IRB approved. Informed consent was obtained verbally from all participants.

g. How were the data gathered? For example, were the interviews taped and then transcribed?  
   **See Methods:** all interviews were audio recorded and transcribed by the interviewer
h. Was any compensation/incentives offered for participation?  
See Methods: no compensation/incentive was offered

i. Reviewer suggests that authors significantly expand the methods section to include the necessary information such that the study could be replicated from the information provided.

2. Long, wordy sentences were used, which can make reading tedious. For example, in the background section, third paragraph, the 2nd sentence has 58 words; in the conclusion section, first paragraph, one sentence has 42 words; in the third paragraph, another sentence has 41 words; and, in the eighth paragraph, one sentence has 53 words. Too many long sentences may make for a ponderous difficult style. The average length of a sentence is between 17 and 21 words.  
See Background: these sentences were revised and shortened concisely.

3. It seems that a significant proportion of the writing uses unnecessarily convoluted phrases as well as stuffy and lofty words. Reviewer would suggest that authors express ideas as simply and as straight-forwardly as possible, using common or expected words. If the purpose is to inform those in the field, make the document reader-friendly.  
All sentences were considered; unclear statements were revised and abbreviated.

4. Inappropriate punctuation is used throughout the document. This may be a reflection of the long sentences, for example, the use of semicolons in a number of sentences. Also, commas are used in a number of sentences that do not require such punctuation.  
Punctuation was improved by shortening sentences.

5. Inconsistent formatting in the body of the manuscript (bolding of titles, spacing between paragraphs, etc.) is a common theme. Sometimes, statements in parenthesis only have the first parenthesis [( ]). Also, at times, the headers will have some words capitalized but not others (that should be if maintaining consistency). For example, "Introduction to the groupsâ€”â€œgroupsâ€”should be "Groups". Authors need to be consistent with formatting. There needs to be a line space between each paragraph or the first line of each paragraph should be indented.  
Headings were formatted accordingly.

6. Additional Specific Points to be addressed: 
   a. Background Section, first paragraph, fifth sentence (The Hindu traditionâ€€): the wording and punctuation need to be edited.  
See background, punctuation and wording were changed accordingly.

   b. Background Section, second paragraph: Do the author mean to use the term â€œincidenceâ€ or â€œprevalenceâ€? As of 2005, does the Caribbean, or specifically does Trinidad, host the 2nd highest incidence rates (I know they host the 2nd highest prevalence rates). No reference is given for this statement. Little information is presented on the specific of the epidemic in Trinidad, such as
actual prevalence rates, reported cases, etc. Also, are more recent surveillance data not available (authors cite a 2001 source which is dated).

See Background, 1st sentence: authors intended “prevalence.”

c. Background Section, second paragraph, second sentence: Why is the term however in the sentence?

See Background: “however” was removed.

d. Page 5, second paragraph (The Roman Catholic (RC)): RC II should be RCII.

All religious representatives’ titles were formatted accordingly.

e. Page 6, third paragraph (The Nation of Islam): The authors may want to clarify the term alpha-interferon for the reader who is not versed in biomedical terminology (as are many who work in the field in the Caribbean).

Reference to “alpha-interferon” was removed upon revision, not having relevance to the central points of the paper.

f. Page 7, first paragraph, second sentence: individuals and family that. The term that is used to refer to objects, who is used to refer to persons.

g. Page 7, second paragraph: this sentence needs rewording it is unclear appears grammatically incorrect. Page 11, fifth paragraph, first sentence (As to how): This sentence needs rewording.

h. Page 11, fifth paragraph, second sentence (For the Hindu): This sentence ends with a semi-colon as though a relevant, verbatim comment would be provided. However, it is followed by a comment from RCII (not Hindu). Is there something missing (i.e., a comment from the Hindurepresentative)?

See Results and Discussion: all points f-h were revised accordingly.

i. Page 16-18 conclusion section. This section needs editing, addressing the comments provided above. It is very tedious to read.

See Conclusion: paragraphs revised accordingly.
Authors’ Corrections and Response to Reviewer’s Report

Reviewer: Ekere Essien
Title: HIV/AIDS in Trinidad: A Dilemma for Religious Groups
Version: 2 Date June 15, 2005

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1. The date(s) that the study was conducted should be included in the abstract.

2002-2003, See Methods

2. The role that faith-based organizations can play in HIV prevention as well as barriers that have limited their participation should be clearly articulated in the background section. This information is available in the literature. In addition, the specific aim(s) of the present study needs to be properly delineated in the background section.

See Background

3. The methodology section needs to be further developed and should include information on the demographic characteristics of the study sample, selection of the study participants, and the development and validation of the personal interview guide questions.

See Methods

4. Did an Institutional Review Board review the study protocol?

See Methods: a retro-active IRB approval is currently pending. The methods were approved by a CAREC IRB for the Brathwaite (2001) study upon which this project was modeled. Verbal consent was obtained from all participants, and letters were recently sent out to all participants that could be located to inform of the potential publication of the research.

5. Additional information needs to be included in the manuscript on who conducted the personal interviews (e.g., level of education, previous experience in conducting personal interviews, etc.), where the interviews were conducted, and if the interviewer used open ended or closed interview format.

See Methods: Genrich conducted the interviews. She holds a bachelor of arts degree; interviews were conducted in offices adjacent to places of worship or representative’s home (in 1 case); open-ended format was employed.

6. The manuscript will also be strengthened by the addition of information pertaining to how the data were collected, transcribed, and analyzed.

See Methods: all interviews were transcribed by the interviewer

7. The readers will be better able to appreciate the contexts of the information provided in this paper if a copy of the guide questions is included in the manuscript.

Provided