Listeners’ opinions of transitional characters improved over time if the characters’ behavior improved. For example, when Marcus (Leona’s boyfriend, who had multiple sexual partners) reformed his behavior, the proportion of regular listeners who considered him morally good rose from 31% to 44%, while the proportion who viewed him as morally bad declined from 23% to 9%. As might be expected, there is more ambivalence about transitional characters who had not fully resolved their behavioral problems at the time of the 1998 survey. For example, regular listeners were evenly divided as to whether Georgie, who at one point fails in his effort to stop using drugs and be celibate with his girlfriend, was morally good (31%) or morally bad (26%).

Surprisingly, listeners’ opinions also were divided about one of the main negative characters, Tony, who had been accused of date rape, led an irresponsible sexual life and was infected with HIV. Some 17% of all listeners viewed him as being morally good, while only 12% viewed him as being morally bad. Some regular listeners also considered him morally good (38%), and women were more likely than men to view him in a positive light (19% vs. 15%). This is an example of the so-called Archie Bunker effect, in which some audience members interpret a negative character as being positive.

Knowledge Variables
Regular listeners to Apwe Plezi were highly cognizant of its educational content. In response to an unprompted question asking listeners what topics they had learned about from the program, 52–60% of regular listeners cited HIV or AIDS, teenage pregnancy or drug abuse (Figure 1). Other salient themes were spousal abuse, marriage, discussion of family planning and rape (cited by 42–48%). Only 16% of regular listeners reported learning nothing from the radio soap opera.

Focus-group participants were also aware of the educational content of Apwe Plezi, as the following comment indicates: “Very interesting, and I learn a lot of different things, such as how different persons deal with different kinds of problems….”—38-year-old man

The proportion of survey respondents who were aware of contraceptive pills increased from 77% to 83% between the pretest and the posttest, and the odds ratio from the multivariate analysis (1.6) was statistically significant (Table 2, page 152). Differences in awareness of oral contraceptives among listership categories, however, were not significant.*

While knowledge that HIV is spread by homosexual intercourse with an infected person was high in 1995 (90%), it increased (to 93%) by the time of the posttest; the multivariate result (odds ratio, 1.6) was statistically significant. Listeners and nonlisteners did not differ on this variable.

Belief that HIV can be contracted by caring for an AIDS patient increased from 24% of respondents at pretest to 37% at posttest. However, the proportion holding this view was about equal among listeners and nonlisteners, suggesting that the rumor was widespread in St. Lucia.

Attitude Variables
Listeners were asked whether listening to Apwe Plezi had caused them to change their attitude about 11 educational themes.

*Results for other variables that were significant in the multivariate analyses are described in the appendix (page 156).