

“Anywhere yuh be, yu not safe”

Adolescence and Violence in Jamaica

Executive Summary

The issue of violence is a critical one for Jamaica; at this moment it could be argued that it is most critical social issue confronting Jamaican society. Research shows that exposure to high levels of violence can potentially have a significant negative impact on the development process of adolescents. The main objective of this paper is to explore the position and perceptions of adolescents and to get an insight into how the exposure to violence impacts on this group of citizens. The paper provides a review of the relevant literature and the analysis of the views of a sample of 170 adolescents. The adolescents’ views were collected from eighteen focus group discussions, held in three distinct geographical sites across Jamaica. The term ‘citizen’ is used deliberately to indicate that a ‘rights’ based conceptual framework informs this analysis. The second, more implicit, objective of this paper, therefore, is to make a tentative evaluation as to how well the Jamaican State is meeting its obligation under the CRC.

The introduction to the paper provides the historical, economic and social contexts in which the voices of the adolescents who took part in this qualitative study can be interpreted. These sections also alert us to the fact that it is factors such as harshness of conditions and deepening inequality, poverty and insecurity, family and community stress, the incidence of child labour, unemployment and unfinished schooling that underlie violence in the society.

The characteristics of modern violence in Jamaica are identified, the literature reviewed and the causal factors discussed. Also, recent statistics and studies on adolescents’ experience and perception of violence in Jamaica are summarized. Nine main themes and issues emerging from the research and literature are outlined.

The findings for the focus group discussions with the adolescents are detailed and discussed in the wider context of the themes identified earlier in the paper. A concluding section identifies the main areas suggested for strategic intervention, and proposes a methodology for social mobilization to make safety the right it is supposed to be.

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“Anywhere yuh be, yu not safe” Adolescence and violence in Jamaica

“What I am seeing in modern society now is that nowhere is safe. Yu can be in yuh house, gunman come in, kick off yuh door an’ kill yuh. Yu can be at school, dey come shoot up the school and kill yuh. Anywhere yuh be, yu not safe. From a your time fi dead a jus’ your time, yuh si mi?” (Student, Norman Manley High School, male, 16-17 years).

Introduction

The issue of violence is a critical one for Jamaica. It could be cogently argued that at this moment it is the most critical social issue confronting Jamaican society. The issue of violence is not an academic issue for us; the prominent Radio talk show host, Wilmot ‘Muttu’ Perkins, has debated the veracity of the terms of reference for the commission of inquiry set up by the Prime Minister to investigate the causes of the violence that erupted in West Kingston. The violence left 23¹ people dead and 27 injured, resulting in the capital city being closed down for two days in early July. Before this particular incident the police and the army were engaged in a special operation to try and stem the outbreak of violence in the inner city, violence that was impacting the tourist trade (Jamaica's largest earner of foreign exchange) and the level of foreign investment. The acute level of fear, engendered by the high incidence of violence that pervades the whole society has caused many middle class Jamaicans who have American, Canadian or British citizenship to migrate or to contemplate migration.² This escape route is not always available to the majority of adolescents living in Jamaica, particularly those living in the inner city and rural areas. Those who have no option but to stay are exposed to high levels of violence, which as research has shown can potentially have a significant negative impact on their development. Jessor (1991) reminds us that this period of life³ is significant because it is: “When most young people lay down the foundations for physical, psychological and social maturity” (quoted in Williams, L. 1998:8).

¹ CNN, 26th September, 2001

² Mainstream migration to the USA was 15146 in 1998; 23300 in 1999. (Economic and Social Survey of Jamaica 2000: table20.3a.)

³ For the purposes of this paper adolescence is defined as those young people between the ages of ten and nineteen years old.

The objective of this paper is to explore adolescents' perceptions of violence and to get an insight into how the exposure to violence impacts on this group of citizens. This will be done through an extensive review of the relevant literature and the analysis of the views of a sample, comprising one hundred and seventy adolescents. The data were collected from eighteen focus group discussions, held in three geographical sites across Jamaica. The term 'citizen' is used deliberately to indicate that a 'rights' based conceptual framework informs this analysis. In this conceptual framework adolescents are seen as 'claim-holders', rather than objects of charity (UNICEF, 2000) whereas the state and adults are seen as 'duty-bearers'.

*“Collectively families, communities, institutions and governments are **duty bearers** and have an obligation to ensure that the CRC and CEDAW⁴ are implemented.”(UNICEF, 2000:1).*

The Jamaican Government ratified its signature to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1991, thereby undertaking to implement the articles of the convention. The pertinent Article of the Convention, for the purpose of this paper, is Article 19 that states that:

“States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child”

The second, more implicit, objective of this paper, therefore, is to make a tentative evaluation as to how well the Jamaican State is meeting its obligation under the CRC.

Background.

a. Historical context: birth in violence

Individual and societal violence is not new to Jamaica. Indeed it could be argued that violence has been an integral part of Jamaican society from its very inception; violence has been stitched into its very fabric. Violence has been institutionalised in all major aspects of the society; it has regulated the relations between the races and classes, and has permeated all of its major institutions (of particular interest in this context schools, the family, the political system, the judicial system and other state institutions); but most importantly of all it has affected the psyche of the people and is buried deep within our collective memory.

It is only with the emergence of Jamaican and Caribbean historians that the roots of violence in the society are being investigated and analysed in ways that produce useful understanding. Until the mid twentieth century, history had been distorted through the lens of first the conquistadors, then the enslavers and subsequently the English colonisers.

A snapshot of this process can be obtained from several eminent historians of the region and its peoples, Jan Carew, Phillip Sherlock, Peter Fryer, Eric Williams, Orlando Patterson, Hilary Beckles and others. Carew describes an example of how Spanish soldiers passed their time in the New World⁵ in the following way:

"Babes were snatched from their mothers' breasts, and a brave Spaniard's strength was tested by his ability to tear an infant into two pieces by pulling apart its tiny legs. And the pieces of the babe were then given to the hounds that in their hunting they might be more eager to catch their prey" (1994:263).

Charles Duff in The Truth About Columbus estimated that in this terrible episode of human history about twelve million Amerindians disappeared forever from the face of the earth (quoted in Carew, 1994:264). The extermination of the indigenous population of the Caribbean set the stage for the arrival of slaves from Africa:

" By the time the slaves from Africa began arriving in the Americas, the European colonizer's appetite for untrammelled cruelty, individual and collective sadism and an unbridled greed for gold had already been titillated by the extermination of millions of native Americans" (ibid: 266).⁶

Although the real horror of the Middle Passage is still to be told, a brief glimpse was afforded to us in Spielberg's film Amistad. Phillip Curtin in The Atlantic Slave Trade estimated that between 1518 and 1874, approximately 10 million Africans were transported to the Americas as slaves and about 2 million of those were sent to Jamaica (quoted in Sherlock and Bennett, 1998:14). It is interesting to note that the recent United Nations conference on racism held in Durban, South

⁴ Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

⁵ Carew is here quoting the eyewitness account of a Spanish priest, Las Casas.

⁶ It is interesting to note that the fate of the Native Americans was not unconnected. He points out that "a tragic postscript to Columbus's relationships with his Jewish and Marrano mentors was that for his second voyage to the Indies there was no question of a shortage of money: Jewish property from one end of Spain to the other had been efficiently pillaged, and the Royal coffers were full." Carew also points out that when Columbus's fleet of seventeen ships was leaving the Bay Cadiz in 1493, it sailed past ships destined for the Guinea Coast, full of destitute Jews. He points out that it was the custom at the time to ship Jews who had had all the property seized to inhospitable places on the coast of West Africa. (1994:269)

Africa (August, 2001) was confronted with the consequences of this specific history of trade in human beings.

The slaves however did not take slavery without putting up some strong resistance, and it is this resistance that was sometimes covert (as in cultural practice which is so well described in Rex Nettleford's Caribbean Cultural Identity)⁷ and sometimes overt. In 211 years of slavery Barbados had only one major slave rebellion whereas in Jamaica slave rebellions "came with the seasons" (Beckles, 1999)⁸. Eric Williams pointed out that these rebellions helped to make the sugar plantations unprofitable and thereby contributed to their eventual demise. It must be understood that in Jamaica, in contrast to many other Caribbean islands, the slaves vastly outnumbered the white population. The majority of the owners were absentee landlords who had very little regard for the social and economic development of the island. They 'repatriated' the capital to England where it provided the venture capital for industrialisation. The majority of the whites left behind therefore were merely hired hands and technocrats who feared for their safety. They therefore sought to subjugate the slaves with a combination of terrors - the systematic application of violence and an ideology of racism.

" The most pernicious effect of colonialism.....for the West Indies has been that many black people have internalised this value system and have come to believe in the deepest recesses of their minds that black is in fact inferior to white" (Williams, 1944:13).

Nearly all of Jamaica's national heroes are associated with the use of violence in liberation struggles. In Staying Power, Peter Fryer details how the state used violence as a means of terror against those seeking their freedom. Paul Bogle led a rebellion in the Eastern part of the island to which the then Governor Eyre responded in the following manner:

⁷ For a more detailed exposition of the various forms of passive resistance see Chapter Six in Patterson (1975)

⁸ Patterson (1975) sets out in some detail the reasons why there were so many slave rebellions in Jamaica compared to any other slave society in the Caribbean, notwithstanding the successful revolution in Haiti. First, Jamaica had the highest ratio (between 10:1 and 13:1) of slaves to whites. Secondly, there was a high ratio of African slaves to Creole slaves, and a constant supply of new slaves from Africa with a recent memory of being free. Thirdly, there was the presence of a high number of slaves from the Akan tribe, which had a strong tradition of military warfare particularly in jungle warfare. Fourthly, the planter class was very inefficient in their administration of the island's security (swinging between hysteria in times of crisis and a lazy attitude in time of peace). Fifthly, the planters treated the slaves so badly that it went below the minimum expectations of the slaves themselves; this was particularly the case when profits were low. Sixthly, the topography of the island particularly its mountainous interior lends itself to guerilla warfare. Finally he points out that at any one time there were always sufficient social issues that encouraged rebellion, for example the introduction of religion (ibid: 260-283).

"He declared martial law and his troops went on a murderous 30-day rampage, killing 439 black people, flogging at least 600 others (some were flogged before being put to death, and some were flogged with a cat among whose lashes were interwoven lengths of piano-wire), dashing out children's brains, ripping open the bellies of pregnant women, and burning over 1,000 homes of suspected rebels" (Fryer, 1984:177).

The historical perspective on violence illuminates the nature of the experience of violence in Jamaican society. The essence of the system was institutionalised violence; violence was the means by which the system was maintained and power was secured. Within the system, Jamaicans were used to violence being used in part by their own to maintain power for others.

b. Children within the institution of slavery

Children therefore did not escape the institutional violence of slavery. Children were introduced to the discipline of the formal division of labour on the plantation from as early as four years old when they joined the 'small gang' usually under the supervision of an old woman. It was generally felt that by the age of five the fruit of a child's labour "was sufficient to defray the expense of their support" (Patterson, 1975:156). Although there was some gender differentiation, after puberty children would transfer to the third and second gang, doing more strenuous work until the age of twenty-five when they would finally join the first or 'great gang' which was the mainstay of the plantation system.

It is interesting to note at this point that child labour was an integral part of the productive process well into the 1940's in Jamaica. After emancipation, working conditions for children were made worse because of the shortage of adult male labour. The estate owners therefore had to place a greater reliance on women and child labour. Beckles argues that it was not until the 1940s that the trade union movement felt that child labour was undermining adult labour. Thus the trade union movement deployed the moral argument against child labour principally as a means of defending adult labour.

Children were not only exposed to the harsh discipline of work on the plantation from an early age but also the harsh discipline of the home, usually imposed by their mother. The severity of such chastisement was felt worthy of commentary by Long (quoted in Patterson), a keen observer of plantation life. In commenting on the strong affections that mothers had for their children he noted that:

*“ In their care for their children some were remarkably exemplary. They exercise a kind of sovereignty over their children which never ceases during life; **chastising them sometimes with such severity**; and seeming to hold filial obedience in much higher estimation than conjugal fidelity” (Patterson,1975:168, emphasis mine.)*

It was this ambivalence in the mother-child relationship that caught the attention of Long. Slave mothers “in general love their children, **though sometimes they treat them with a rigour bordering on cruelty**”⁹ (Patterson, 1975:168, emphasis mine).

Patterson (1975) argues that this combination of extreme cruelty and great love and affection for children is one of the continuities from the slave period which still exerts a strong influence on child rearing practices in Jamaica today. He also sets out a possible explanation for the origins of this severity in the chastisement of Jamaican children by the mother by arguing that “her cruelty to her children was partly the displacement of aggression and hatred for the driver and overseer; partly her own ignorant way of inculcating respect and loyalty in her children” (ibid:168).

It must also be borne in mind that within the plantation system children were regarded with ambivalence both by the mother and the slave owner: the mother because a child constituted a greater burden as the master did not give any more provision for the maintenance of a child; the slave owner because the child took the mother out of the production process for a period of time.

Although it is not a contradiction that the vast majority of Jamaicans lived easily with one another in peaceable and mutually supportive ways, the degree to which violence had become institutionalized as a means of disciplining children, and the extent to which children were raised in abusive contexts, are both areas of concern and research in the society up to and including the present day. Developing this research agenda may, for example, help to shed light on why it is so difficult to reduce the practice of harsh corporal punishment not only in Jamaican families but also in schools¹⁰. A possible hypothesis could be that the legacy of the institution of slavery still

⁹ It was of necessity dealt by the mother because as Patterson (1975) argues the role of the father was actively discouraged by the slave owners. He argues that the male could not assert his role as a husband or a father because he possessed neither role; they could be taken from him without a moment's notice. Indeed the woman, he points was more often than not, because of her sexuality, closer to the source of power. Thus the mother was the dominant or more often the sole factor in the rearing of children. He argues that “it is no wonder that the male slave eventually came to lose all pretensions to masculine pride and to develop the irresponsible parental and sexual attitudes that are to be found even today” (ibid:168).

¹⁰ See Meeks-Gardner, Powell and Grantham-Mc Gregor (2001). Using a sample of 1416 children and 185 teachers from 10 randomly selected schools in Kingston and St. Andrews the researchers found that 81% of teachers had beaten a child with a strap, belt or a ruler. 87% of the children said they been beaten.

makes it very difficult for Jamaican society to see children as ‘citizens’ with intrinsic ‘rights’ of their own.¹¹

The historical impact of the violence in Jamaican society is revealed in the awareness expressed by adolescents in Jamaica today that even if they themselves have not experienced violence at first hand, their friends have, the system certainly metes it out, and they themselves should not be surprised if and when they do experience it.

c. Economic and social context: harshness of conditions and deepening inequality

i. Poverty and insecurity

Jamaica is a country of 2.6 million people. The wealthiest 10% of its citizens consume ten times as much as its poorest 10% (UNICEF, 2000). In 1999, the poorest 10% lived on the equivalent of less than USD1.10 daily and in the same year, families existing below the poverty line have been estimated at 16.9%¹² of households across the country. Urbanisation and emigration have had profound effects on families. Over half of the country’s population lives in urban areas, with 43% of the population living within the Kingston metropolitan area itself. However, poverty rates in KMA are the lowest (10.6%); rural poverty rates are 22% and in some remote areas, as much as double that again (UNICEF, 2000). Twice the number of the local population lives in “foreign”; longstanding networks of rural extended family supports have been drastically stretched, stressed or broken. “Barrel children” (children dependent on income from one or more parents abroad) have become a new constituency of children in need (Brown, 1997).

39% of the population is estimated to be children under the age of 18 (50% are under 25 years old) (UNICEF, 2000). Poverty rates among children continue to be higher than among the general population. One child in five is poor. Children between birth and 18 years represent the largest group of the poor, on average 49% for all the years 1989-1999. However, “this is not a new phenomenon – poverty in Jamaica has always been felt most keenly by children” (UNICEF, 2000: 15). Despite excellent Human Development Indicators, investment in the development of children is heavily constrained by spending required in health, criminal justice and correctional services caused by increasing crime and violence. This level of spending has increased sharply in the second and third quarters of 2001 (UNICEF, 2000).

¹¹ This area has been discussed in a recent paper on parental resistance to child rights (Brown, 2001).

¹² This figure represents a reduction of 45% since 1989 (Survey of Living Conditions 1999:24).

Newman Williams and Sabatini (1995) drew attention to the impact on children of intergenerational poverty. Sustained priority attention was cited as being necessary to break it. The efforts in children's policy at that time provided a framework for sustaining priority attention; however policy has been developed separate from the critical understanding needed of the difficult relationship between the necessary conditions for the effective transformation of Jamaica and the necessary conditions for human development.

" Many of the social problems in Jamaica are preventable and rooted in the neglect of children, starting during the earliest years of their life. The causes of poverty can be traced back to a mix of sociological, economic and political factors operating at the macro level which impact negatively on children's development, but it is the dynamics of these disruptive processes and how they handicap children and their families which need to be analysed and understood, for effective planning and action for human development" (ibid:1).

In 1995, UNICEF developed a global model (adapted from "Adjustment with a Human Face" UNICEF 1987) encompassing the more recently advanced principles of "Development with a Human Face". The model distinguishes between the social "flow variables" which respond quickly to changes in economic conditions (household cash income, government policies affecting expenditure and distribution and relative prices of goods, parents' time for childcare and child education) and the social "stock variables" which respond very slowly (household assets, values, attitudes and practices at community and household level, parenting skill and parents' education).

"This capital stock can actually cushion the effect of short-term recessions, but it does respond to prolonged economic crises, and has tremendous long-lasting implications for social and economic development. Social outcome indicators are evident in Jamaica: functional illiteracy, lack of socialisation and self esteem, lack of life skills and productive skills in youth, migration and brain drain. The ultimate manifestation of the damages done by persistent economic crises is the observed deterioration of the social capital, as shown by the disintegration of solidarity within society, disruption of social cohesion and general insecurity. The consequence is a reduced financial, physical and human capital available for economic growth" (ibid:2).

Support for this model is to be found in the recent case study of the August town community by Levy (2001) who points out that:

"Values, their decline, are at the root of the crime, economics mainly where values are missing. It must be immediately added, however, that the economic and human ill-treatment of the inner city by politicians and police with the blessing of the wider

society represents a large part of that society's own decline in values and is perceived as such by, and impacts as such on, the people of the inner city" (2001:3)

UNICEF (2000) describes the growing social deficit in Jamaica, evidenced in the level of crime and violence, generalized distrust, corruption and difficulty getting communities organized. Almost 40% of households report feeling dissatisfied with life; 56% feel unsure about the future; and almost 30% have emotional difficulties (PIOJ/STATIN, 1999). Crime and violence are described as “stable features” of Jamaican life. Although both crime and homicide rates have decreased in recent years they remain at alarmingly high levels. 869 murders were reported in 1999, 33 murders for every 100,000 people. After the deaths of 23 in less than a week in Western Kingston in July 2001, Kingston was described as the murder capital of the World. Violence threatens personal safety, interferes with economic livelihoods and undercuts social cohesion. Many factors are identified as contributing to violence: drug trans-shipments, domestic violence including abuse of children and political violence. It is heavily concentrated in urban areas (28% of all murders take place in Kingston) and the majority of crimes are committed by young people (55% of all crimes were committed by those 26 and under in 1999) (UNICEF, 2000). However, children and young people also make up 40% of murder victims between the ages of 13 and 25 years (PIOJ, 1996)¹³.

The ripple effects of crime are felt beyond the social, economic and political arenas; their impact is also on health and liberty. Injuries to men aged 15 to 44 years account for 60% of disability-adjusted life years (DALYs) lost. In 1990, one out of 10 DALYs lost was due to homicide. Accidents and injuries in the age group 15 to 18 years account for 15% of deaths in this age group (Ministry of Health, 1997). Adolescents (10 – 19 years of age) are most at risk of motor vehicle accidents, accidental lacerations, head injuries/fractures and blunt injuries (PIOJ, 1999). Added to these statistics, the number of young males between the ages of 20 and 30 who are incarcerated (most of whom have at least one child) takes successive tolls on at least two generations. Social fragmentation and erosion of social capital are amongst the clearest impacts of violence. Crime and violence make it difficult for any community organization to function (Moser and Holland, 1997; UNICEF, 2000).

ii. Family and community stress

¹³ more recent statistics on young victims not available

Research reveals a growing incidence of female headed households (44% of households), one of the highest in the world outside of West Africa. Children from female-headed households are of policy concern in Jamaica because of the high incidence and the perceived vulnerability of households headed by women. However, Handa (1996) has shown that these children are no worse off (socio-economically) than their counterparts in male-headed households, both because of the expenditure behaviour of female-headed households and because of the differential use of health care inputs.

Family structure in Jamaica is distinguished by the fact that procreation tends to occur outside conjugal unions, so children are born into a variety of family types and domestic situations. The child may move through several living arrangements, including resident-mother and visiting-father, common law union or a legal marriage, or find his or her situation “redefined to that of step-child in a household where the mother or father has a new resident partner. In other cases, the children of earlier unions may be shifted to live with grandmothers or other relatives”(Government of Jamaica/UNICEF, 1995b). Half of the unions between biological parents have ended by the time a child is 11 years old (Samms-Vaughan, 2001). However, close association with a wider kinship network can counterbalance the potentially disruptive effects of these changes. It is notable that although 40% of children do not have their father’s name on their birth certificate, 80% of fathers do contribute to the financial support of their children (UNICEF, 2000). The wider network provides community for the child which assists with identity development and sense of self. However, it can also open the door to exploitative relationships through the exposure to potential abuse from non-family and family members (Williams, S. 2000).

Traditional patterns of child rearing have been undermined by economic forces in society and by parents’ helplessness in face of the erosion of their authority. In a study of urban poverty and violence, families are revealed as living increasingly adrift in marooned communities in urban political garrisons and rural outposts (Moser and Holland, 1995). Violence is found to be very much a part of the parent-child relationship (Le Franc et al, 1998, quoted in UNICEF, 2000:27), and is accepted as natural and normal. A study of children’s perceptions of violence found that 95% of students in one inner city school reported being “beaten, kicked or punched “ by a female caregiver (UNICEF 1999). 30% of adolescents have expressed worry about the fighting and violence seen in the home, fearing that one or other of their parents will leave them (PAHO, 2000). The absence of a parent, especially the mother, is a primary determinant of criminal

behaviour among boys. In communities controlled by gangs, a don figure often becomes a substitute parent for young men and parents often leave socialization of young boys to the don who takes young boys “in training” (Gunst, 1995; Bailey et al 1998; UNICEF, 2000). Of particular concern in one study (Moser and Holland, 1995) was the physical abuse of children which is perceived to be widespread and a part of everyday life. There is quantitative evidence in the literature to support this perception flagged up in the Moser and Holland qualitative study. In a clinical study, of 2220 cases of child abuse, Milbourn, (1994) found that, inter alia:

- Child victims of violence are predominantly female
- Sexual abuse is the most frequent form of violence
- Boys do not escape sexual abuse
- Some children are abusing other children.

In constructing the profile of the perpetrators of abuse she pointed out that over 70% were male, mainly between the ages of 20-49. In the context of this current study it is interesting to note that she found that some 25% of perpetrators were adolescents under the age of 19 years.

Mental health problems amongst adolescents are increasingly of concern. There was almost a doubling of reported suicides between 1996 and 1998. Adolescents accounted for 31% of all suicides in 1998. Feelings of discouragement or fear are common among teenagers. 22% reported worrying about violence and fighting in the home. 50% worry about violence in their communities. Those who worry are more likely to express extreme anger and are also more likely to commit suicide (PAHO, 2000).

“Jamaican society is characterized by extreme inequalities. These are readily observable in the society and they have a psychological impact on young people in terms of their trust in the fairness of the existing social system, view on the value of life and outlook for the future. The diminished value apparently placed on the life of the poor and disadvantaged people and inequality reinforced by social institutions is frequently internalized by young people” (UNICEF, 2000).

The impact of economic harshness can be felt in the cultural sphere, in the music, the lifestyles, the “otherness” of values, attitudes and social expectations that are developing away from the mainstream of society (Williams, S. 1998). For all community members including children, mobility in poor areas has become restricted (Moser and Holland, 1995, Chambers, 1997, and Meeks-Gardner, 1999). Child-to-child interactions are constrained within the cramped conditions of the “yard” whilst overcrowding has been cited as instrumental in exposing children early to

adult sex. In many areas, dance halls, youth clubs and sports facilities no longer function because of the high levels of violence. The lack of youth facilities is perceived as depriving youth of opportunities for socialisation, getting help with school work and developing a vision for their futures (Moser and Holland, 1995).

iii. Child labour, employment and education

Approximately 4.6% of children between the ages of 6 and 16 are working (Government of Jamaica/UNICEF, 1995a)¹⁴. Children, generally boy children, who work the streets are not typically abandoned or homeless. They work to increase family income, the school system having failed to provide them with outcomes or routes which would improve their earning possibilities were they to stay the course of their educational entitlement (Williams, S. 1998). It is estimated that the majority of these children come from the poorest 20% of Jamaican families (PIOJ, 1999).

“Child participation in paid work is visibly on the rise. The informal sector is currently the fastest growing area of child labour. This is largely because of the rapid growth of the informal sector, which has spawned a number of enterprises that are unregistered and unfettered by regulations that govern, working conditions in the formal sector. Children who work as household servants might be the most exploited children of all and the most difficult to protect”(Government of Jamaica/UNICEF, 1995a).

Young workers, especially those in the 14-19 age group and particularly teenage girls, are particularly affected by the downturn in the economy. 46% of all teenage and young workers are unemployed. These young workers are both out of school and out of work. Most have few skills training and many are illiterate. Increasing youth unemployment raises concern because of the link between unemployment and other social problems, notably crime, drug abuse, teenage pregnancy and violence (UNICEF, 2000, PIOJ/STATIN, 1999). In a very interesting study of youth unemployment, Anderson (1998) showed not only that youth unemployment was disproportionately higher than that for adults but also that it was a distinct phenomenon which necessitates a different mix of macro policies than those normally applied to the problems of adult unemployment. We can no longer assume that policies used to reduce the level of adult unemployment will automatically lead to a proportionate reduction in youth unemployment.

She argued that the relationship between employment and years of schooling for young males is “U” shaped. The implication of this is that the highest rate of employment is to be found amongst young males with fewest years of schooling. The out of school population has grown to 22%

¹⁴ Recent research undertaken by the International Labour Organisation will, it is anticipated, provide a more accurate and up to date figure.

amongst the 12 to 18 years age group in 1998 (PIOJ/STATIN, 1999). Enrollment drops rapidly after 14 years of age from 96% to 40% for boys, and from 99% to 57% of girls in the 17 to 18 years age group. The males are the majority in the out of school group (55.8%) and 60% of those are from rural areas. Altogether less than 21% of 17 – 18 year olds are enrolled from the poorest quintile compared to 87% from the wealthiest.

The message being sent by the labour market therefore is that there is little point staying on at school, particularly for boys, if you are poor. The consequence is that these young men not only miss out on the knowledge that would make them competitive in the formal sector of the economy, they also miss out on the secondary socializing effect of associating hard work at school with success in the job market. The labour market is actually rewarding young men for leaving school early. The message is reinforced by the image that young people now have of a number of rich and successful people who have succeeded without significant investment in formal education, for example, DJ's, Sport Stars and Vendors.

The above sections on the historical, economic and social contexts provide a background in which the voices of the adolescents who took part in this qualitative study can be interpreted. These sections also alert us to the fact that it is the economic, historical, social, political and cultural contexts in which adolescents experience their 'adolescence' that will to a large extent determine 'Tomorrow's Adults'¹⁵ (Danns, G., Henry, B. and LaFleur, P., 1997)

Characteristics of violence in modern Jamaica

The violence of the early period of Jamaican history should not readily be used as a device to explain the modern violence that Jamaica has experienced since the mid-1960's. Although I would agree with Storr (1968) that aggression and violence are a part of human nature, I would not want to argue that our current levels of violence can be directly attributed to the violence of the conquistadores, slavery and colonialism. However, the State in Jamaica since the time of the conquistadores has legitimised the use of excessive violence as a normal part of the State's apparatus. It was coming out of this context, and continuous with it, that the party of independence in the second half of the twentieth century, the Peoples National Party, could connect democratic socialism to the historical fight for emancipation.

¹⁵ This is the title of a publication by the Commonwealth Youth Programme; its sub-title is "A Situational Analysis of Youth in the Commonwealth Caribbean".

In support of this point the late Carl Stone has argued, cogently, that history is of little use to us in trying to explain the post 1960's surge in crime. Up until the late 1960s, Jamaica's crime rate was very similar to the rest of the Caribbean, but since that time we have left the rest of the Caribbean far behind (for example, the murder rate in Jamaica in 1996 was 37 per 100,000 persons, which was approximately twice the mean for Latin America and Caribbean region, Harriott, 2000:13) ¹⁶. Stone questions how can so similar histories in the Caribbean give rise to such divergent experiences? As **Table One** (appended) illustrates, the crime rate in Jamaica really took off in the 1970s and 1980s.

In an excellent paper, Crime and Violence: Socio-Political Implications (1987), Carl Stone set out a number of factors that he considers to have contributed to the escalation in crime, particularly in urban areas.

- ◆ Shrinkage in the agriculture sector gave rise to urbanisation
- ◆ Increased outward migration weakened the family 's socialisation of the young.
- ◆ Decline in living standards since the 1970's. Stone argues that the society had great difficulty adjusting to economic depression after two decades of growth was followed by decline.
- ◆ Two decades of growth in the 1950s and 1960s gave rise to an "*expectation-gap*" which people sought to bridge by migration or crime if they could not achieve material advancement by legal means - hence the growth of the underground economy.

Headley (1994), an eminent Jamaican criminologist, adds some new factors. He cites the growth or rather the integration of Jamaica into the international drugs trade, a trade that diversified into crack cocaine soon after the Americans insisted on the elimination of the Jamaican ganja market in the mid 1980's. Also, a significant factor is the development of "garrison constituencies". Following independence, the two political parties the Peoples National Party and the Jamaican Labour Party soon sought to establish control over the important growing political constituencies of the inner city by moving in their own supporters and hiring gun men to protect them. To maintain their hold on these territories they imported guns for their supporters, particularly at election time. The supporters who came to be designated as community leaders or "dons" soon

¹⁶ In 1998 this had increased to 40 per 100, 000, the highest in the Caribbean region. The current data shows that the rate has fallen to 34 per 100,000, (ESSJ, 2000:24.4). If, however, current trends continue then there is high probability that the rate will climb to its 1998 level.

realised that they could use these guns to enrich themselves in the period between elections. The links between the politician and the rise of drug gangs in Jamaica, the United States and Canada are drawn graphically by Gunst (1995). She argues that the politicians lost control of the dons who use violence as a systematic way of maintaining their power base. They are at the head of an underground economy in which young people are recruited as foot soldiers and socialised into a culture of drugs and violence, fitting very neatly into the already extremely macho culture of the ghetto. Many of the dons go to North America and to the United Kingdom to expand their drug business and those who get caught are with increasing frequency not jailed in the prisons of the developed world but deported back to Jamaica where they continue their life of crime; these are called "deportees" in Jamaica.

In his book Police and Crime Control in Jamaica, Harriot (2000) confirms the trends identified by Stone, Headley and Gunst¹⁷. Indeed he argues that crime and violence are now so firmly 'embedded' in the social fabric of Jamaican society that the society can be described as "highly criminogenic" (ibid:25), with the following characteristics:

- Pervasive criminality and disregard for law across all social classes.
- The overlap between the business elites of the formal sector, the political elite and the criminal elite
- A developed, well-integrated underground economy.
- Majority approval, or at least tolerance, of the types of crimes driving the underground economy
- Criminality becoming increasingly anchored in institutionalized relations and occupational roles
- Increasing acceptance and prevalence of elements of the criminal normative system and moral neutralization process (the doctrine of necessity, the shifting of obligation and duty to the victim)
- Criminally acquired resources easily translatable into social power
- Pervasive criminality within the justice system and general authority structures.

¹⁷ It is interesting to note that Harriot agrees that political violence laid the foundations for the growth of drug gangs and their concomitant violence. He points out that "the period of political violence served to "school" criminals (who doubled as party militants) in organization, extended their contacts spatially and socially, armed and trained them in the management of violence and, most importantly, resulted in the accumulation of a large blood debt between urban communities. The political 'war' therefore gave impetus to various forms of social violence, including the violence of ordinary criminality" (ibid: 8).

Harriott argues that the structure of crime has changed in Jamaica to reflect Jamaica’s increased involvement in the drugs trade and the use of violence as a tool to protect ‘turf’ and to maintain discipline within the gang and the local community; this shift from property crime to violent crime is illustrated in *Table Two* below.

Table 2: The Structure of Crime (percentages). (Harriott, 2000:9)

Type of Crime	1974	1984	1993	1996	Change %
Violent crimes	10	41	40	43	+33
Property crimes	78	38	29	23	-55
Fraud	3	3	4	4	+1
Drug crimes	9	9	13	12	+3
Illegal possession of guns	1	3	3	4	+3
Other	0	6	11	14	+14

Sources: STATIN 1975; ESSJ 1984, 1993

He points out that the increases in violent crimes are “sustained primarily by the drug-driven character of the underground economy and the use of violence to regulate its transactions and to mount competitive challenges. This level of violent crime is indicative of the more pervasive use of violence and aggression as a mode of conflict resolution” (ibid:11). The implication for adolescents here is that this provides the social context in which many of them are socialized, a context in which violence is seen as normal. As Harriott puts it:

“ a new generation has grown up under these conditions, in a milieu in which the internalized moral inhibitors against criminality are considerably neutralized” (ibid:17).

When the above is added to the lack of income earning opportunities in the formal sector¹⁸ then the incentive to get drawn into this way of life is very difficult to withstand. It should come as no surprise then to see that the rate of juvenile crime increased from 332 per 100,000 in 1993 to 394 per 100,000 in 1997 (ibid: 17)¹⁹. Indeed attempting to remain outside of this sphere of activity, particularly in many inner city communities, is more likely to draw suspicion on oneself as either being a coward or a likely informer. Harriott puts this well when he points out that “to exist

¹⁸ This is particularly the case for those older adolescents living in those areas that have a negative social stigma attached to them.

¹⁹ Based on cases brought before the courts (ibid:17). Adolescents’ involvement in serious crimes will be dealt with specifically in a separate section below.

beyond this boundary as enemy (political, social) is to qualify as a legitimate target” (ibid:22). Referring specifically to the inner city communities that are dominated by gangs and crime networks, Harriott points out that:

“ young males, preferable those with high school education, are targeted for gang recruitment by involving them in activities such as transporting gun , manning observation posts during times of gang warfare or in support of drug dealing and collecting protection money” (ibid:21).

It is important to add a word of caution to Harriott’s assertion that Jamaica has become a society that, in his words, is “highly criminogenic”:

“ what identifies Jamaica as a highly criminogenic society is not simply the reality of these elements but their centrality and embeddedness in the different aspects of national life - the accumulation process, market relations, public administration and the political process” (ibid:25).

Although he adduces some empirical evidence on the changing structure of crime and corruption within the police force a great deal more evidence is needed on the ‘centrality and embeddedness’ of the elements, set out above, within the different aspects of national life. It is also arguable as to how far one can extrapolate what is going on in the inner city to the country as a whole.

It could also be argued that Harriott has not given sufficient weight to the countervailing factors that could halt the slide into a “criminogenic” society. For example, many of the laws that control the accumulation process, market relations and political process are global; they are externally set standards to which the country has to conform. Another countervailing force that has to be taken into account, particularly in the Jamaican context, is the role of religion. It is said that Jamaica has more churches per square mile than anywhere else in the world and it could be that a countervailing value system emanating from this sub-system of the social structure could make a qualitative difference to the type society existing in the future. Levy (2001) argues that many social commentators fail to make the critical distinction between ‘criminal gangs’ and ‘corner crews’. He argues that although there is some overlap in membership, the corner crew is principally about social activities whereas the former is predominantly about crime. In failing to make this distinction it could be that Harriott is overstating the society’s apparent predisposition to crime.

Notwithstanding the above cautions we should perhaps see Harriott's assertion as a somber warning as to what could happen to a society that fails to take the necessary drastic actions to stop itself degenerating into what indeed could be described as 'criminogenic'.

a. Structural and underlying causes of modern violence in Jamaica

There are two significant arguments emerging from this literature that illuminate causal factors in modern violence. It is essential to understand the social processes at work to appreciate how these arguments coalesce to generate the escalation of violence that threatens the very social fabric of Jamaica's fragile social structures. One argument is socio-economic in nature. The deteriorating economic situation is characterized by no growth, high interest rates that stifle investment, population growth (which, although slowed in recent years²⁰, remains a factor combined with the reduced opportunities for migration as the richer countries restrict immigration), liberalisation of markets and the shift to the minimum State resulting in less social security spending. This combination of factors was forced on Jamaica by the structural adjustment policies of the lending agencies on which Jamaica depends. They have created a society in which poverty is prevalent and in which there is a widening of the differential in the distribution of income and consumption levels, and the development of mass unemployment and under-employment. Such an economic environment, it is argued, provides the motivation and the opportunities for young people to become involved in violence either as perpetrators of crime or victims of crime. As Headley summarises:

"Many crimes committed in Jamaica are responses to the material conditions inherent to economic dispossession, severe inequality, and general hopelessness. Disconnected youths who are powerless to change their bleak condition take advantage of the "opportunities" afforded by street crime. It is not ghetto or a violent subculture - or any other internal "pathology" - that impels them. Rather, it is the need to survive, to 'exist in a society where survival is not assured by other, collective means'" (1994:59 quoting Quinney).

This position is supported by Headley's own research in the 1980's into the characteristics of the inmates of Jamaican prisons. As expected the vast majority came from the urban ghettos. Before their arrest the inmates had no assets, many had no access to the basic necessities of life, they had no vocational skills and over 80% of them had never held a steady job. Over two-thirds were illiterate and 99.9% were males. He points out that the system spends a vast amount of resources locking up a significant portion of those people who are already locked out of the society:

²⁰ Whilst population growth has slowed, birth rates have not fallen amongst adolescent mothers. Teenage birth rates are the highest in the Caribbean. 20% of live births are to teenage girls (UNICEF, 2000)

"namely the black youthful males whom the nation's political, economic, and educational system have consistently failed"(ibid:44).

Headley's position is reinforced by Steven Messner (1989) who demonstrates that the greatest predictor of a country's homicide rate is the level of economic discrimination in that country.²¹ In his study, Messener looked at a number of independent variables such as income inequality, level of urbanisation, population density, degree of political democracy, percentage of males between the ages of 15-29 years old and of course the level of economic discrimination. With the exception of Zimbabwe, which was at the time under white rule²², of the 77 countries included in Messener's study, Jamaica was the country with the highest degree of economic discrimination (77%). Messener quotes the argument of Blau and Schwartz that "consolidated inequalities thus tend to produce pent-up aggression which manifests itself in diffuse hostility and violence" (1989:598). The fact that most of the crime is committed in the ghettos does not vitiate his argument because "the victims of criminal violence are likely to be convenient targets, even though the root cause of the violence might be "diffuse hostility" generated by consolidated inequalities"²³(ibid).

The second thesis is the one developed by Stone. He argues that Jamaican society has undergone rapid and severe structural changes that have resulted in a change in class relations. The change in class relations fall into two types: one is the elimination of the old white colonial class and its concomitant traditional values and the second is the failure of the new black entrepreneurial class to establish its hegemony. Hence there is a lack of societal leadership with the authority or the legitimacy to establish a new moral code. Thus there is a vacuum and moral chaos with many values vying for hegemony. When this added to the lack of parenting, urbanisation, the penetration of the American culture and the dominance of the free market ideology, then the "old" morality is replaced by one of expediency and individual choice; it is not of the Durkheimian type which fosters social and collective solidarity.

²¹ Messener defines economic discrimination as "the denial of access to economic resources on the basis of largely ascribed social characteristics such as race, religion, and ethnicity"(1989:599).

²² I wonder if Messener repeated his study he would find that Zimbabwe was still the country with highest level of discrimination.

²³ Note that the issue here is not just about income inequality, which is only one part of the consolidated inequalities, but more about how people feel about the resultant inequalities. If they feel that they had an equal chance to compete and they lost, then they are less likely to be angry and therefore the level of diffuse hostility will be less.

b. Types of Violence

Before we look in greater detail at the data for violent crime in general and for adolescents in particular, I think it is useful to make an analytical distinction between the different types of violence as it is not a homogenous phenomenon. Following Headley, I think it is useful to distinguish between individualised crime that is to do with individual pathologies and structural crimes that for Headley are linked to the social structure. A preponderance of such crimes he argues usually "indicates some deep-rooted pathology within the social system" (1994:36). These crimes cannot be eradicated by the application of individualised corrective measures such as imprisonment. Here violence is used as a tool to achieve an objective, to remove the person standing between a thief and the goods he wishes to steal. It is also important to make a distinction between petty crime and serious crime. The violence associated with the latter tends to be deployed by those who use violence as a way of maintaining their power over others or their access to resources, for example, the don of an area deploying violence to stave off a challenge to his authority. The violence of the former tends to be used by those Ken Post (1978) describes as members of the "scuffler" class involved in the informal economy.²⁴

c. Adolescents' involvement in violent crimes

My focus will be on the violent crime in Jamaica's urban areas, as this is the main cause for concern; indeed more than 65% of the country's crime takes place within the Kingston Metropolitan Area (KMA), the area comprising the capital city, its suburbs and immediate rural communities. It is also necessary to be reminded at this point that the vast majority of adolescents do not get involved in crime or deviant behaviour. This is consistent with Coleman's Focal theory of adolescence in which it is argued that because adolescents focus on dealing with one major issue of development at a time they are able generally to negotiate the period of adolescence relatively unstressed and make the transition to adulthood, relatively unproblematically. We therefore should not, even unwittingly, perpetuate a pathological model of adolescence in relation to crime and violence.

From *Table Three*²⁵ (attached) it is seen that the 13-19 year olds account for 24.2% of the persons arrested for major crimes in 1999. One of the most interesting features of this table is the fact that no females were arrested for shooting, robbery, rape or carnal abuse in 1999. Breaking these

²⁴ In relation to this type of crime, Herbert Gayle has described to me how the crime rate escalates around "going back to school" time. He argues that is because fathers try desperately to find the funds to give to their baby mothers, so that their children can be properly equipped for the new school year.

²⁵ Economic and Social Survey of Jamaica (1999:236). The age group referred to is 13 –19 years.

categories down into greater details we see that adolescent males/females were 19.4% and 17% respectively for those arrested for murder; combined they represented 19.2%. In terms of shooting, adolescent males accounted for 24% of those arrested. More disturbingly adolescent males accounted for 27% of those arrested for rape and 35.2% of those arrested for carnal abuse. Finally, they accounted for 24% of robbery. Given that the 10-19 year olds constitute approximately 19.4% of the total population, then it is a disturbing fact that adolescents do appear to be over represented in their involvement in serious crimes. If we look specifically at the reasons why juveniles appeared in court in 1999 (See *Table Four* attached) we see that rape, assault, wounding and larceny accounted for approximately 33% of such appearances in court. It is also interesting to note that those in 'need of care and protection' accounted for 47.4% of such appearances; could there be a relationship between these two figures?

d. Recent studies on adolescents' experience and perception of violence

The pervasiveness of the violence in the lives of a significant minority of adolescents has been confirmed in a number of quantitative and qualitative studies. Moser and Holland (1997) used a participatory methodology to collect their qualitative data. A quantitative methodology was adopted by Challender (1996) in a study conducted in twenty-four schools in the Kingston area. Over the four- week period of her research she found:

- 70% of students had seen fights in which a weapon was used
- The most frequently used weapon was a knife
- 30% of students had been hurt in fights and needed treatment by the teacher
- 50% of students reported that their property had been damaged deliberately by other students.

Meeks-Gardner (1999) undertook recent quantitative research into the perception and impact of violence on adolescents. Using a sample of 1,710 children between the ages of nine to seventeen, attending 11 schools in Urban Kingston and St. Andrews, she found:

- 86% defined child abuse as violence.
- 33% considered insults and retaliation as violence.
- 10% thought that a person who walked away from a fight was a coward.
- 75% felt that a person who walked away from a fight would be picked on.
- 50% felt that retaliation was justified.

- 83.7% knew children who carried a weapon, such as a knife, to school.
- 80% said children in their class fought a lot and were worried about violence at school.
- 40% reported that students threaten teacher with violence.
- 21% reported that students actually have attacked teachers at their school.
- 75% felt their neighbourhood was unsafe.
- 50% witnessed violent acts in their neighbourhood.
- 75% felt unsafe travelling to and from school.
- 33% had been victims of violence themselves at least once.
- 60% had at least one family member who had been a victim of violence.
- 66% knew someone well enough to talk to who had been a victim of violence or been killed.
- 82% felt that violent TV was bad for children to watch and could make children more violent.
- 77% thought the church was the most helpful institution in reducing the level of violence in society.
- Perception of violence varied according to age, socio-economic status, and school type.

Meeks summarises “there was a high level of reported experiences of violence, and perceptions varied by age or grade level, gender social background and school type.” (1999:7).

Meeks- Gardner et al (2001) provide information on the child, family and school determinants of aggression and prosocial behaviour in school children. They found:

- 80% of the teachers said that they did beat the children, 81% doing so with an implement such as a belt or a ruler.
- 87% of the children reported being beaten by a teacher.
- Other punishment such as being made to kneel, stand in the sun or in uncomfortable positions, were also commonly reported.
- 66% of the children had seen a dead body and nearly 50% of these had seen the body of a person who had been killed.
- 75% had heard of someone in their community who had been killed.
- 33% were afraid of someone in their community or yard.

- 50% knew someone who had been shot, 39% knew someone who had been stabbed or cut and 23% knew someone who had been raped.
- 32% had seen the police or soldier pointing a gun or shooting at someone.
- 23% had seen someone other than the security forces pointing or shooting at someone.

The significant outcome of this study however is that the boys in the aggressive group were exposed to more violence both at home and in their community, and the strongest predictor of a school being rated as violent was the presence of neighbourhood violence and corporal punishment.

The UNFPA (2000) Baseline Youth Survey restricted itself to older adolescents between the ages of 15-24 years of age and its methodology was quantitative²⁶. It is interesting to note particularly for contextual purposes the following results of that survey:

- A higher percentage of young people felt unsafe in Maxfield Park compared to those in Montego Bay and Clarks Town. (2000:30)
- Significantly more females than males felt unsafe at home in Maxfield Park and Clarks Town (ibid:30).
- In each of the three sites more females than males reported being victims of violence. Age was only significant in Clarks Town where a higher percentage of older respondents reported being victims compared to younger ones.
- A higher percentage of respondents felt safer in their homes than in their communities. As expected, more females felt unsafe in their communities than males (ibid:31).
- Over 40% of respondents witnessed acts of violence.
- Only a low percentage of respondents reported being perpetrators of violence and although the percentage was generally higher for males, this was not the case in Clarks Town where more females than males reported being perpetrators of violence.

The pervasiveness of the violence in many of our schools was confirmed in a study that utilized a focus group methodology in identifying the views and experiences of adolescents²⁷. Chambers (1997) used focus group discussions in a fairly representative sample of the different types of

²⁶ The areas covered in this survey were selected for focus groups in the UNICEF/UNFPA study (2001)detailed later.

²⁷ A similar methodology was used in the UNICEF/UNFPA study (2001) detailed later in this paper.

schools to be found in the Kingston area. Themes arising out of her quantitative study are set out below:

- Many adolescents experienced violence at home, school and in their communities
- Many of the triggers to violence tend to be trivial –“over nothing at all” (ibid:17) usually verbal insults relating to ones mother.
- Many adolescents experienced verbal and emotional abuse from parents and teachers.
- There was a premium on being ‘bad’ or on the gaining of ‘stripes’.
- Revenge was a major factor in the perpetuation of violence.
- Many adolescents felt unsafe on the streets or even going to school on a daily basis. They constantly felt vulnerable and feared that they could easily be caught up in someone else’s war.
- Many adolescents felt that teachers did very little to reduce the level of violence in the school.
- Many adolescents experienced emotional trauma from the violent incidents they witnessed or were personally involved in.

Themes and issues emerging from the literature and research

The large body of literature and recent research studies on violence and its possible impact on adolescents indicates the significance of this issue to Jamaica. The themes and issues emerging are as follows:

- Violence, or the threat of violence, has been present in the rearing and disciplining of children and adolescents in all classes of the society since recorded history began. Violence was the corner stone of slave society in Jamaica. This violence permeated all the major institutions of society including the family. The harsh punishment of children is one of the social practices that is still present and widespread in its use in the family and in our schools.
- There is no consensus on a moral code for society, resulting in a moral void for adolescents. Stone argues that the inability of any class to establish its hegemony over Jamaican society has left a moral void. The ideology of materialism and the survival of the fittest is the lead contender to fill that moral void. Headley points out that the combination of this ideology with the party political struggle for power and the establishment of ‘garrison constituencies’ (together with Jamaica’s integration into the

international drug trade and the subsequent decline of the Jamaican economy) has led to the creation of structural forces that in turn lead to the escalation of crime and violence as people struggle for economic survival. Harriott goes further and argues that the coalescing of many factors has led to the creation of a 'criminogenic' society in Jamaica, a society predisposed to crime.

- Fear of violence. In the recent research the impact of violence is reflected in the amount of fear it induces illustrated by, for example, the care taken in choosing which path to take in walking to school, reluctance to participate in community activities which could hinder the development of independence.
- Poverty is intergenerational and affecting adolescents negatively. Data are adduced to illustrate the fact that many adolescents are caught up in the cycle of intergenerational poverty and that this poverty erodes social capital by negatively impacting on such variables as for example values, community solidarity, self-esteem and critically, by weakening the family's capacity to socialize its young.
- Lack of evidence of the use of alternative ways to resolve conflicts. There is little evidence to support the view that conflicts can, or are, resolved without recourse to the use, or threat, of violence. The institution of slavery was maintained by the use of violence and violence played a significant part in emancipation and in social struggles thereafter. Could it be that this legacy has served to legitimise the use of violence in resolving inter-personal conflict?
- Violence is perceived by adolescents as useful for survival and social mobility. It is a characteristic of modern violence that the politician/political parties use violence to gain, and sustain, political power (Gunst, Headley). The local area don uses violence to secure and maintain his power base in the local community and protect his drug turf. The deployment of such violence enables the don to acquire the symbols of material success (Harriott), and in some cases to become a role model. The adolescent, particularly the male, soon realizes that he can gain the respect of his peers if he is seen to be the 'baddest' and the best fighter in his school or neighbourhood (Chambers). With such a reputation he can take what he wants from those who cannot fight as well as him and he can achieve the status of a 'galist'. The evidence, both in the formal and the informal system, suggest clearly that 'badmanism' pays dividends. Survival is not assured by other collective means (Headley). In such a context, it could be argued, that violence is a 'rational' tool to deploy in the quest for material goods and the quest for self-esteem and self-affirmation (Chambers, 1997).

- Adolescents are very familiar with and exposed to violence. The majority of the research data, both quantitative and qualitative, show that adolescents are exposed to a high level of violence in the home, in their communities, and in their schools. The data also point to the fact that exposure in turn is one of the best predictors of aggression, particularly in boys. The high level of exposure to violence is a constantly recurring theme in the literature. This is first captured in the historical literature that alludes to the harsh treatment meted out to children, particularly by their mothers, on the plantation. This has continued to the present time and characterises adolescent experience both in the home and the school (Meeks, 2001). Exposure to violence in the home also comes in the form of abuse (Milbourn, 1994) and domestic disputes. Adolescents also witness many acts of violence in their community, which leave them fearful for their own safety and that of other members of their family (Meeks et al, 2000).
- Adolescents experience violence in teacher pupil relationships.
- Lack of faith in the implementation of justice, law and order. Many adolescents witnessed the police pointing a gun or shooting at someone (Meeks, 2001) and have little faith in the police dispensing justice (Levy, 2000).

The UNICEF/UNFPA study (2001)

a. Purpose of the approach

In recognition that a number of quantitative research studies have already been undertaken in this area it was felt important to undertake a qualitative piece of research that would enable adolescents to express their views on this critical area for them. This purpose is consistent with Article 12 of the CRC:

“ States parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child”.

Such a purpose would also enable the agencies sponsoring this report, and their partners, to identify the extent to which the literature resonates with the lived experience of a fairly representative group of adolescents.

b. Contexts and methodology

This study was conducted in three geographical sites in Jamaica: Maxfield Park, in the capital; Montego Bay, the second city and tourism capital; and Clarks Town, a rural town. The study was

conducted among adolescents ten to nineteen years of age and the three sites are described following terms:

“ Maxfield Park is located on one of Kingston’s major thoroughfares, linking downtown and uptown areas of the city. It is in one of the city’s most volatile areas, where disputes among local gangs often threaten the peace of the neighbourhoods and occasionally curtail the movement of residents from one side of the street to the other. This volatility has worked against the delivery of public social and health services to the residents. Montego Bay is the island’s second largest city. It is a booming tourist town, and tourism provides employment for many of its residents. Clarkstown is a rural settlement located in the hills of Trelawny. The town and its populace are distributed along a major transportation route. The heart of this rural settlement is the Long Pond Sugar Factory, which is the main provider of employment and responsible for the establishment of important facilities including its own clinic and residential area. Besides the sugar factory there are no other visible means of support.”

Eighteen focus groups were held²⁸, across the three sites, involving 170 adolescents. Each of the sessions lasted for approximately two hours. Adolescents aged 10-15 were drawn from six schools, whilst the older adolescents aged 16-19 were drawn from schools and communities in Montego Bay.

It is important to note at this point that the very fact that the majority of the adolescent participants in this study were in school suggests that we were not dealing with those adolescents who had already dropped out of school and become extremely alienated from the system. Indeed it was clear that the majority of the adolescents taking part in the focus groups saw themselves as being able to find a way of not getting caught up in the crime and violence that they saw around them.

A set of questions was used to act as trigger for discussion. As can be seen in **Appendix One**, questions one to four were warm-up questions designed to get insight into the adolescents’ social support structures and their role models. A separate sub-section on violence was added to illicit insights into this area of adolescent experience. The emphasis of the research was on violence and not on crime. Crime is only looked at in terms of how it relates to violence.

²⁸ For a description of the focus group methodology and its implementation in this study, please see the report on the focus groups by Jean Jackson for UNICEF and UNFPA (2001)

One of the major objectives of the UNICEF/UNFPA study (2001) is to facilitate adolescents to articulate concerns for themselves. Thus in reporting the findings of the research, young peoples' comments are quoted at length and the author's comments set out separately.

C. Limitation of the method used to collect data

It is difficult to select a sample for focus groups that is representative of the national adolescent population. Although sites were chosen to capture rural, suburban and urban differences, and age ranges, it was not possible to strictly allow for socio-economic differences in the schools used for the study. The majority of the schools used for the study were located predominantly in the lower socio-economic areas, thus the findings of this study are more representative of those adolescents from the lower socio-economic categories.

No triangulation was put in place as a part of this study thus there was no means of independently testing the validity of what the adolescents said in the focus groups. We know that the peer group exerts a very strong pressure on adolescents to conform to group norms. It is difficult therefore, to know if what was said in the focus group discussions really represented the views of the individuals or whether the adolescents said what they thought the group would expect them to say. As there was no way of resolving this dilemma it was assumed that what was said did indeed represent the views of the individuals that uttered them.²⁹

A related problem is the fact that the presence of adults participating and observing also could have influenced the adolescents in what they said and what they felt able to disclose. In one of the focus groups that I observed there were several other official observers from other interested agencies. It was quite apparent that the presence of so many adult outsiders was impacting negatively on the discussion that on this occasion focused on adolescent sexuality. In another group where I intended as a silent observer I actually participated in the discussion. It is also interesting to note that many of the participants referred to the moderator as "miss", giving her honorary teacher status. It is exceedingly difficult to measure the effect of such interference in the data collection process, yet alone screen it out.

Notwithstanding the above problems the researcher is then presented with a number of transcripts of conversations from which he/she has to make a selection of those parts of the conversations that will be used in the process of data analysis. This raises the issue as to how subjective such

selections are. Burton (1978) offers the analyst a way out of this dilemma by pointing out that we should attempt to resolve this methodological problem “not by justifying the selections made from the social worlds under investigation (that is a theoretical choice) but through the demonstration that these selections are rooted in that empirical world”(1978:176). I sought to do this by allowing the adolescents’ voices to make their points as far as possible, which at times entail long excerpts (in the local patois) from the transcripts. I have also set out in detail the historical, social, economic and political contexts that I think are essential to provide a framework for interpreting what is said. The analyst, however, cannot escape importing at times a theoretical framework to give some coherence to what are disparate pieces of speech uttered not for the purposes of analysis but as part of a spontaneous conversation.³⁰

The above immediately alerts us to the fact that the analysis of data collected from focus groups entails the analysis of ‘text’ and as Widdicombe and Woffitt (1995) remind us text includes “objects, events and processes which are imbued with meaning and interpretation” (1995:56). The significance of this is that the methodological tool used to ‘expose’ the discourses embedded in such texts is ‘discourse analysis’ in which discourses are “ systems of meanings which reflect real power relations, and which in turn are consequence of the material and economic infrastructure of society” (ibid: 59). The import of this for the analyst is that in this approach to discourse analysis the emphasis shifts from what the narrative is about to what function the narrative serves. As Storey puts it, “it shifts our concerns from ‘how’ the story is told to ‘why’ and from those whom the story is about to those who tell and consume the story” (1993:94). Thus for example the Tarzan stories tell us very little about the colonized but a great deal about the colonizers.

Selections made by the analyst of focus group discussions and the theoretical framework used probably says more about the analyst and a reflection of the power relationship between the analyst and the institutions that undertake the research than it tell us about the adolescents themselves. The analyst’s interpretations themselves become a text in which discourses are embedded.

Findings from the focus groups with adolescents

²⁹ It is interesting to note that this is also a challenge and a problem in quantitative research.

³⁰ Irrespective of how contrived the focus groups were, there was an attempt to make the young people as comfortable as possible so that the conversations could flow as naturally as possible.

a. The person who is always there for you and in what ways

Although this was a warm-up question it was interesting to note that across the three sites and across the three age groups there was consensus amongst the adolescents that the person most likely to be there for them was their mother. The importance of mothers is captured in the following exchange between the moderator and students from Melrose Junior High:

Moderator: What about the others, who is there for you?
Student: Mother
Moderator: Mother again. In what ways is she there for you? 'Cause mother seems to be popular in this business. What about, ahmmm, Dian?
Dian: I go to my mother.
Moderator: You go to your mother for everything?
Dian: Yes, miss.
Moderator: Food, if you crying, everything?
Dian: Yes miss.

Even the older adolescents relied heavily on their mothers. For example one participant from the Montego Bay (16-19, out of school group) pointed out that:

“Yea, well for me it’s the same with my mother if I need something or have a problem, we can lean on her”

For many students mother was the main care giver: “my mother give me everything I need, she send me to school, buy my food, buy my clothes” (Clarks Town, boys, 13-15 years) and the main disciplinarian: “my mother put her foot down and give clothes, a place to sleep and good education” (Melrose Junior High, girls, 13-15 years). Mothers are the main person that prepared them for life. Two participants made this point when they said “mother tell me what to expect in life” and “mother steer me in the right direction” (ibid).

It should not surprise us then that verbal abuse, especially relating to the insult of one’s mother, should be one of the principal triggers of conflict and violence between adolescents (Chambers, 1997:12). Within the Jamaican context mothers are key to the psychic and physical well being of many children and such insults threaten the stability of their world and they would defend their mother with everything they had, particularly the boys. This point was made simply by one young man who made it clear that if “A man kill mi madda still mi a kill him whole family mi tell you dat, him whole family” (Melrose Junior High, boys, 13-15 years).

b. Perception of violence

In order to get an insight into adolescent's perception of violence focus group participants were asked what they meant when they used the word 'violence' and what kinds of behaviour they would define as 'violent':

- War between individuals in which weapons are used to inflict injury or death.
- Some behaviour that was 'illegal'
- Harsh corporal punishment meted out to a child by a parent
- Domestic violence, which usually meant parents fighting.
- Verbal abuse.

The most common perception of violence was that it connotes war and conflict at an inter-personal and group level where weapons are brought into play. As one participant from Clarks Town (boys, 13-15 years) put it, violence is "when somebody fight and cuss and cut up one another" and another pointed out that violence is "war fighting" (Clarks Town, girls, 16-19 years). A participant from Melrose Junior High described violence as "warish kind of behaviour" (boys, 13-15 years). Others chose not to define violence in an abstract way but in very personal terms. One student saw violence as "when your parents beat you too hard, miss." (Clarks Town, males, 16-19 years).

This theme of violence as harsh punishment was also picked up in the younger age group in Clarks Town, again in the male group, when a student pointed out that "once my mother was beating me because I fighting another boy an shi beat mi an beat mi like she can't stop" (10-12 years). For others violence was the latent fear of waiting for something to happen to you, particularly in the younger age group. As one boy puts it, violence is when "some bad boy lay wait fa yuh in the bathroom and take away your lunch money" (Melrose Junior High, boys, 10-12 years) and another in the same group issues a warning that "you have to be careful who you walk with".

An interesting theme emerging out of the discussion around the perception of violence is the notion that violence entails an act that is illegal. Several participants from Herbert Morrison define violence as "illegal behaviour, miss" (boys, 13-15 years) and another within the same group saw violence as "corruption". This perception of violence also appears in the discussion with students from Clarks Town (boys, 10-12 years), where it is pointed out that violence is "something against the law". Picking up on this theme another student in the same group adds

that violence is “like something against the rule, like hurting somebody, chopping up, stealing, fighting”. Admittedly this perception seems to be held within the younger adolescent group but it does suggest that these adolescents at least have not got so hardened to violence that they do not see it as something that is wrong and frequently against the law. This perception needs to be reinforced in a very positive way in the school curriculum and used as a strategic point in general public education. The older age group was more likely to see violence in non-physical terms, for example as emotional violence. Within the Montego Bay mixed group (16-19 years) this perception was articulated by one of the participants who pointed out that:

“ I see violence like chopping, violence means words, even like when a girl see you leaving her for another, she will be hurt emotionally, so it’s a kind of violence.”

The main gender difference in the perception of violence is that girls were more likely to have seen rape, carnal abuse and cruel/ harsh punishment by parents as violence.

c. Main causes of violence .

There was a plethora of reasons given as to the causes of violence, indeed many students pointed out that it did not take a lot to trigger violence. Any manner of ‘dissing’ would be sufficient to illicit a violent response. Some of the major causes of violence were:

1. Verbal abuse. “Dem quick pon dem tongue” (Herbert Morrison boys ,13-15 years). There were many examples given of this.

2. Revenge and retaliation. As part of the discussion participants were asked their views on the biblical saying of an “eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth”. Nearly everyone knew of the saying and the vast majority agreed with it. As one female participant in the Melrose Junior High (girls, 10-12 years) group put it “ Yes, miss mi nah tek nuh body lick. If them lik mi, mi ago fight. If them no sorry (others agreeing).”

There was no gender or age difference in the responses. It was clear that there was tremendous peer pressure not to appear soft, especially for the young males, as being seen to be tough was critical to the gaining of ‘stripes’; this will be dealt with separately below. As one of the participants from Melrose Junior High (boys, 10-12 years) put it “ If you gwan like you soft dem wi tek you fi beating stick” and even where a person might want to turn the other cheek, there is a

high price to pay, as can be gleaned from the following exchange between the moderator and one of the focus group (Montego Bay, mixed group,16-19) participants:

Moderator: So when young men say look, I'm not fighting, what happens to them?

All: Them get beat up.....(laughter).

3. Gaining “stripes”. All the groups were asked how important it was to be seen as bad and in what ways does a young person gain their “stripes”. The gaining of stripes is closely related to the importance of not appearing to be soft, as in not retaliating when dissed. The major difference between the two is that the former is offensive whereas the latter is defensive, in that one positively goes looking for fights to prove oneself. As a participant puts it: “ You have to fight the baddest somebody in the school, when you beat them you get your stripes” (Melrose Junior High, males, 13-15 years). Paradoxically one of the rewards for having stripes is that on the whole you have the potential of leading a more peaceful school/community life, because people do not ‘romp’ with you once you have your stripes and you are perceived as being able to defend them. A male participant from Herbert Morrison (13-15 years) supports this point when he points out that: “All the fighting part miss you feel good fi know seh nuh bwoy nah go romp wid you miss and yu jus live in peace all the while miss”. Many of the young men felt that having stripes also helped in improving ones attraction to the opposite sex and it was felt by both males and females that girls would be more attracted to a boy who was seen as ‘bad’ because at the very least he would be able to protect her. The other main route to gaining stripes was being an excellent sportsman, especially ‘a’baller’ or a ‘gallist’

In the gaining of stripes we can see a clear gender difference. Although girls do fight and some girls like to be seen as bad, it is considered critical for boys. This point is supported by one of the participants from the Clarks Town focus group (girls, 13-15 years) : “ Some girls fight, but the boys fight all the time”.

That the paths to ‘respect’ are engendered is captured in the following exchange between the moderator and a student in the Clarks Town (girls, 13-15 years) focus group

Moderator: What are some of the ways in which girls and boys gain respect?’

Student: Girls are respected when they study hard in school

Another student states “ In school boys fight because of boosting. They fight and use bottle; one bottle hit me on my finger. If they don’t fight they call them idiot” (ibid.) In addition to studying, girls can gain stripes in the traditional sexual attraction arena, as pointed out in the Melrose Junior High School (girls, 11-12 years):

Moderator: How do girls get boost up?
Student: Dem wear short skirt
Student: Dem bleach dem face.
Student: Dem wear ‘batty rider’ an’ sometime di man dem like it an’ when di bwoy dem unh pay dem no mine, dem move up dem bottom. Dem tek bleachin’ pill..
Student: Dem use stuffin’ inna dem bra, miss. Dem use escallion an’ thyme fi rub pon dem breast fi mek it get bigga.
Moderator: Eh, that’s a new one. Make them breast bigger?
Student: Yes, miss.

We see that the ‘dual’ standard of morality, so prevalent in the adult world, is being reproduced effectively in the adolescent world. This is seen in the differential value given to multiple partners:

“You see al di girl who have more than one boyfren, dem call the girl all kind of name. But if di bwoy have twenty and ten girlfren, di bwoy get bare respect. Dem sey, ‘you a gallis, my yout” (Melrose Junior High, girl, 13-15 years)

In their book Why Man Stay So (Brown and Chevannes, 1998), the authors show how boys are reared outside the home, as this is where they “learn” how to be men and girls are reared in the home and yard in a far more protected environment. This is summarized in the Guyanese saying “Tie the Heifer, Loose the Bull”. In this context the school as extension of the yard for girls and the out of school environment for boys could be seen as a continuation of this socialization process and a preparation for life in a society that is very ‘macho’ and exceedingly violent in some of our inner city areas as depicted above by Harriott (2000). It should come as no surprise to us then that boys are performing so badly in the education system. If Anderson (1998) is correct in her argument that the economy in the formal sector is offering no incentive to young males to gain formal qualifications, then the socialization that is reinforced by the peer group culture in many local communities especially in the inner city is doing a far better job of preparing young people to survive in the hostile and violent culture in which many of them will have to continue to live their lives as adults.

4. **Teacher/Pupil conflict.** This is a trigger to violence that surfaced in several of the focus groups and merits closer consideration. The discussion with males from Norman Manley High School (16-17 years) will be used at length to illustrate this issue as it captures many of the underlying issues that need to be teased out if research such as this is to inform policy.

- Student:* Teacher fight the students too, miss.
- Researcher:* Teachers actually fight the students!
- Moderator:* That has been coming up.
- Student:* Yesterday in my class, my form teacher an' a bwoy kick off. My form teacher tell 'im fi get out of the classroom an' 'im never want to get out. 'im say 'im gwine go out an' sir say 'im must not come back to school till 'im see the principal. The principal say 'im must not come back to school wid 'im hair plait up, 'im must trim 'im hair. 'im come back to school wid 'im hair plait up and Mr.....say, 'im must go see the principal and not come back to 'im class. Mr.....hold 'im an' choke 'im an' push 'im out, an' 'im come back an' tek out 'im knife.
- Moderator:* Who take out the knife?
- Student:* Teacher tek out 'im knife.
- Moderator:* Then, teacher take out knife too?
- Student:* Yes, miss.
- Moderator:* OK.
- Student:* An' 'im hol' on pon 'im an' say, "a whe yuh a do"? an' hol' 'im down an' start choke 'im.
- Researcher:* At this school?
- Student:* Yes.
- Researcher:* Teacher choke the student?
- Student:* An' even if you go to the office an' report it, nothing nuh come outta it.
- Moderator:* So, how often teachers fight students?
- Student:* A tell yuh, miss, dem fight more than we.
- Student:* The student them bring them tings deh pon themselves more time. If di student curse teacher, the teacher dem ah go fight back an' 'show sey dem nuh fraid a dem. If dem doan do dat, dem ahgo always give them trouble.
- Moderator:* So, how often teacher fight student? Although the teacher, Is teaching you self control, you saying sometimes the teacher loose them cool?
- Researcher:* But the teacher want to show that they are the boss.
- Student:* Yes, sir
- Student:* You know the problem with this school, the teacher don't respect the student.
- Student:* Not all of them.
- Student:* Some of them don't respect the students, that's why the students do't respect them. That's it. Some of them (students) are very difficult to deal with.
- Student:* Yuh see, we have one teacher who used to teach ninth grade, every time dem mek noise anytime 'im put 'im pon di board. Dem walk out, an' gho whe dem waan gho in everyclass him go. But 'im neva fight 'im hold 'im temper an' lef di school. Because if 'im did stay one more term probably

'im an' somebody woulda fight. 'cause everday the man come inna di class, when dem nuh throw bottle pon 'im, pure bad word dem tell 'im.

Moderator: What kind of bottles? Plastic?

Student: Yes, the guys them no easy.

Student: Miss, Mr..... all get kick.

Researcher: So the teachers see themselves as having to defend themselves against bad boys?

Moderator: So, let me ask you: you say that some of them carry knives, so the security guard nuh tek whe di knives

Student: Dem have ways an' means to pass the security.

Student: Yu see when dem hide it, 'im caan find it. Some a dem put it inna dem rag an' start wipe dem face mean time him a search dem.

There are a number of issues raised in the above discussion that merit commentary. This commentary is offered as a contribution to the debate rather than as a definitive analysis.

- Conflict over hair-styles has been a source of conflict in schools for as long as this researcher can remember. The concern here is that teachers apparently seem ill equipped to resolve such conflicts without recourse to violence.
- There is a possibility that the problem is greater than simply the lack of conflict resolution techniques. It reveals a state of mind that suggests teachers themselves have allowed themselves to be caught up in the general culture of 'badmanism' that exists particularly in our inner city communities, and some would argue, in the general society. They will maintain their place in the power hierarchy even if it totally undermines everything they stand for as members of a profession and the content of the formal and the informal curriculum. If teachers cannot withstand this pressure to retaliate, for fear of appearing soft to their charges, then how can we ask students to exercise this level of self-control?
- It is interesting to note how the students boil down this conflict to the issue of 'respect' or rather 'dis-respect'. The relationship appears to have deteriorated to the point where the vicious cycle of 'dissing' is continuously oiled each day by the inevitable trivial skirmishes in the trench warfare that has always existed, to some extent, between teachers and pupils.
- The fact that pupils and (some) teachers bring weapons into the school confirms what many students have said in the groups about the lack of safety in schools. Not only because of the normal fighting that takes place between students, but because there is no real security. Several students from Norman Manley High School (girls, 16-19 years) made this point:

Student: "Dem come fire shot ina the school an' di teacher dem haffi go under the desk."

Student: I don't feel safe anywhere.

Student: Don't feel safe at school, miss, because when bad man ready dem jus' walk in an dhu what dem waan dhu"

The inability of the school personnel to protect the children in their charge was forcibly brought to the attention of the researcher by a participant in one of the focus groups. The student graphically described an incident in which a gang of other youths was coming to beat him up at his school. He knew they would be waiting for him in the playground so he went and told the school principal who told the pupil that the best he could do for him was to lend him his cellular telephone so he could call members of his family to come and escort him home.

- Implicit in the above text is the notion that the moral and authority structure in some of our schools again mainly in the inner city, is under great strain. Indicators of this are, firstly, that some pupils have no confidence that justice will be done if a teacher abuses pupil's rights. There is no point in seeking redress from the senior managers of the school. Secondly, there is a general feeling expressed in the focus groups that teachers either do not want, or are powerless, to stop the violence they experience in school on a daily basis.

d. Drugs.

In order to obtain an insight into how adolescents perceived the contribution of drug taking, and drug dealing, to the level of violence they experienced and to the level of violence generally, two questions were used as triggers for the debate:

- In what ways do drugs contribute to violence in your community?
- How could someone get drugs if they wanted?

The most striking theme that emerges through all the discussions, irrespective of site and age, was the consensus on how easy it was to get drugs, particularly ganja. Male adolescents at Norman Manley High School (16-17 years) point out that pupils need not leave the school compound to get a 'spliff'. They explain to the moderator that:

Student: The thing I see in this school is the Ganja....yuh know that basically in the bathroom, boys use it.”

Student: “Dem smoke it roun the back”

Moderator: Ganja is more accessible?

Student: Is like the norm.

Moderator: But, what about coke?

Moderator: You have to go across the fence?

The ease of access to drugs is illustrated in the following excerpt from the Melrose Junior High School (girls, 13-15 years):

Moderator: So what about in your area, your community, how easy is it to get drugs?

Student: drugs?

Moderator: Ganga, cocaine....how easy is it?

Student: Ganja very easy fi get.

Student: Everywhere yuh tun dung a my yard smaddy a sell a ten dolla a bag.

Moderator: Right there in the community?

Student: whe part yu live?

Student: Manning Hill Road. You evah go dung town yet an’ si dem have it a sell like how Mr. Brown would sell a banana chips pon di rack? A soh dem have it a sell it.

This prevalence is not only in the inner city or in the tourist areas, as is illustrated in the following excerpt from the Clarks Town (16-19 years) focus group:

Student:All di top man them. Boys dem inna Clarks Town a drug dealers and them not afraid to talk. Then they have police friends who are in it so it don’t really make sense. It is like everybody a run free inna Clarks town.

It was generally accepted that buying coke was a little bit more difficult to purchase in that you have to know the right person to go to “ No, miss yuh have fi go to like the inside man fi dem ting deh”(Melrose Junior High, girls,13-15 years), but the difference was only slight as indicated by a young female adolescent in the Melrose Junior High School (11-12 years), when she states that “Miss, I si ganja in the shop but dem hide an’ sell di cocaine. Dem sell apple an’ banana an’ sell ganja wid it.”

There is, however, no attempt to hide it in Clarks Town as the following quotation from one of the older adolescents in the Clarks Town (16-17 years) indicates: “ Everybody knows down to the little five year olds.” Confirming this assertion another participant in the same group points out that “There’s a corner in Duncans³¹ and the man dem sit down and if you just (clapping of hands): You see them coming same time. It is so easy to get drugs here.”

³¹ Duncans is a rural town, not an inner city area

There was consensus across the sites that dealing in and consumption of drugs are significant contributors to the level of crime and violence. A male participant in the Montego Bay (16-19 years) focus group patiently explains this to the moderator in the following way: “You have those who kill and rob to get it, dem is the users. Now the dealers, when dem expect yuh to deliver it to a special time, and yuh don’t, well yuh lose your life”. Many cited examples of drug deals going bad, in their community and school, as a major trigger to violence. As an example a participant in the same group shares his memory with the group to make this point: “ Yea, I remember a case when a man was sent to deliver something, and they tricked him, as it was flour. So who he deliver to want to beat him up, and who sent him want to beat him up too.”

The discussion around drugs and violence threw up several interesting themes which merit further consideration:

- First, it gives us insight into one of the ways in which adolescents get initiated into the culture of drug use. It is not only peers that introduce adolescents into drug use but, clearly also adults, as can be gleaned from the following excerpt in which the student is referring to adults who live next to, and control, the school playing field:

Student: Sometime them give you a smoke. If you nuh smoke wid dem, dem ahgo sey “watch it boy, yuh a momma’s boy”.

Moderator: If they give you the spliff, you have to take a draw out of it, or else..?

Student: They call you chicken.

- Secondly, it is clear, from the following excerpt, that the adolescent jury is still undecided as to whether or not ganja is a dangerous drug. The contending perceptions are captured in a direct response to a question from the moderator, in the Montego Bay (16-19 years) focus group:

Moderator: so how you think of ganja, dangerous or not?

Participant: I don’t think of it as dangerous, it’s natural healings.

Participant: It a cure.

Participant: Cure! It can lead to cancer

Participant: Me smoke it, it good for me asthma.

Moderator: And how it make you feel?

Participant: It help move the bad feel on my chest.

Moderator: It don’t make you feel sleepy and lazy?

*Participant: Not at all (disagreement by most)*³²

- Thirdly, the role of the **big man** emerges as a shadow figure that controls violence from a distance. As one of the participants in the Norman Manley High School focus group (girls, 16-19 years) puts it: “When big man give little boy drugs fi sell an’ dem use di money dat cause violence because the big man nah mek dem rob ‘im money so”. The big man’s role is not just restricted to drugs but is implicated in other types of crime and violence. We glimpse the image of the big man again during the discussion about the gaining of stripes by boys in the same focus group:

Moderator: So, how young boys get the stripes?

Student: Dem have gun

Student: Some of them turn big gunman.

Student: Big man give dem gun.

Student: My friend hide fi ‘im gun inna di school yard.

Student: When police come fi search the school, dem nuh search di girl dem; So the boy give the girl dem gun fi keep.

Moderator: So, the girls keep the boys gun for dem.

Student: Yes, miss.

It is not only in relation to the dealing in drugs that the adolescents allude to the role of the ‘big man’, as is seen in the following extract from the Norman Manley High School (boys, 16-17 years):

*Student: You see all di people dem who shot up Public...(KPH) mi did have a little cousin down deh, about fourteen, (age) ‘im sey when dm gho een gho kill di man an di police dem, when ‘im see dem a come out, ‘im sey a three little boy ‘im see, each o’ dem have teo gun inna dem hand an’ a run wid it. **Like di big man dem send dem gho kill a man**³³*

*Student: **Big man send dem gho duh a job.**³⁴*

Moderator: So, what making young people get involved in violence in your view?

Student: Money

In the next part of the discussion we get an insight into how adolescents are drawn into a potential career of crime, as the student points out that “Di the big man dem give di boy dem money an’ treat dem good fi a long while an’ den dem ask dem fi a favour. An’ anything dem tell dem fi duh dem dweet”.

³² Noted by the transcriber.

³³ Author’s emphasis

³⁴ Author’s emphasis

There is also a different, and more positive, perception of the big man/drug don. This 'dual' perception is expressed in the Herbert Morrison (boys,13-15 years) focus group, in the following way:

Student: Miss yu see drug dealers miss... dem do bad tings and dem do good tings yu nuh.

Moderator: Eeh?

Student: Drug dealers yu nuh miss...dem do bad tings and dem do good tings.

Moderator: How?

Student: Cause sometimes a di same drug deales a help poor people yu nuh...cause di government nah do nuttin fi dis country.

Student: Cause nuff a di people in a di community fi children 'im keep function....keep treat.

This theme of adults using children to perpetuate crime is not missed by the young adolescents, as can be seen in the discussion in Corinaldi Primary (males, 10-12 years). In response to the moderator asking "How easy is it to get drugs or for drugs to be passed to young people of your age?" one student replies, "very easy" and another immediately point out that it's "very easy because some people use children to carry the drugs because they know the police would not look on the children" and another supports this assertion by adding "they use the children and promise dem a lot of money and they don't give dem".

- Fourthly, the discussion around drugs hints at a possible gender and age division of labour in the underground sector of the economy. From the above discussion we see that young male adolescents and females in general are employed in the support services. For example we are told by some of the participants in the Clarks Town focus group (girls, 16-19 years) how the male dealers try to recruit them to smuggle drugs abroad for them:

Student: From I was going to school people were asking me to do it. People in Clarks Town ask me to do it. Guys used to come up to me and she let me feel yu belly.

Moderator: They come straight up to you? (student interjects).

Student: Dem tell you how much money you can make.

Student: Yes straight up to you and especially if you have your visa. And say yes you can carry about twenty. And them going tell how to do it. Yu swallow one ice cube. And yu practice off a dat.

Moderator: Let me hear from.....

*Student: they will come up and say to you, you know me. You know what me do already. So and so do it for me and dem neva catch him. It is not like mi a send yu to foreign fi mek them catch yu. And mi know dem nah catch yu. Cause wi have wi contact at airport. **Mi want yu fi carry it up fi wi man.**³⁵ Yu get pay inna US. Is jus dat dem a tell yu.*

Although it is possible for a girl to become a dealer in her own right, we are told that the path is a very long and tough one. In response to the moderator's question, within the same group discussion, as to how tempting it is for a girl to become a dealer, we are told it is "not very tempting. You have to go through training. You have to go through from the bottom. You have to deliver. Then you have to swallow and carry it up for them. It is like a training course. You have to reach the point where you can split off on your own and start get your own stuff, before you can say, you are a true fledged dealer."

- Fifthly, adolescents are aware of the corruption entailed in the drugs trade. As set out in the quote from the (Clarks Town, girls, 16-19 years) group drug dealers are not afraid to talk about what they do for a living because "they have police friends who are in it....so it don't really make sense. It like everybody a run free inna Clarks Town". What does not make sense here is obviously the fact that the police are there to uphold the law and her perception is that it is exactly the opposite that appears to be the case. This theme of corruption is also to be found in the Montego Bay (boys, 16-19 years) group where reference is made to the variety of business people and politicians who are perceived to be involved in the drugs trade.

Participant: Seriously, government mix up in dis ting. The furniture builders and those kind of people. The use cars, furniture, dead people..."

Participant: "Wheelchair, clothing, all kinds of tings"

Another participant in the Montego Bay Corinaldi (girls, 11-12 years) group expressed the view that the police's involvement in the drugs trade makes them unfit to be role models. She based this conclusion on her own personal experience in the following way: "Police not good role model. Police plant ganja on the taxi. I was in the taxi when he ask for driver's license and he refused to give him back his driver's license and he say man go 'bout yu business and other police come up and the police say "this man na want me search him". The other passengers sneak out and the police tek time put the ganja and the other police find it. Police not good role model. (Agreement)"³⁶

³⁵ Author's emphasis.

e. Exposure to violence.

Three questions were asked to stimulate discussion about the type of violent acts and incidents that adolescents have personally experienced. The questions were:

- ❑ Describe three of the worse violent acts you have seen with your own eyes.
- ❑ What was the first violent act that you can remember?
- ❑ Describe the last violent act you saw with your own eyes.

Participants were all eager to share their experiences and there was no shortage of incidents to be shared. Several such experiences are outlined below to illustrate the discussion and to reflect what some of our adolescents have to contend with during this critical developmental period of their lives.³⁷

Student: “ My mother and father fight. She had a knife and my father a peace of board, neighbours stop them. They still fight. (Clarks Town, girls, 13-15 years)

Student: “ I saw the violence....at home with my mother and father.... Ma father beating ma mother and my father use the cigarette and burn har on her han’ and like dem send me out. Mi haffi go out go tell lies ‘cause this lady next door an sey like my father beating ma mother” (Melrose Junior High school, girls, 13-15 years).

Student: “ One day I went to Kingston³⁸ Mathews lane, this guy sa to this yute, you chop mi brother and he chop him in the head, him drop but him nah dead so the guy chop him in ‘im neck and then run’ then ‘im turn back and ask me, “ you see anything? And I say , no” (Montego Bay, mixed group,16-19 years).

Student: “ Police shoot my cousin at mi foot and him drop dead at mi foot” (Melrose Junior High School, boys, 10-12 years)

Student: “ Miss, like the time the student stab the teacher after he was boxed by the teacher.” (Clarks Town, girls, 13-15 years).

³⁶ Transcriber’s note.

³⁷ This concern about the high level of exposure that adolescents have to acute violent incidents is captured in Chambers’ recommendations: “ The second recommendation is for immediate recognition of the serious levels of violence to which some children are exposed and from which there are limited routes of escape” (1997:59).

³⁸ When participants were asked where they saw the most violence and where they feared violence most they all agreed that Kingston was the most violent part of Jamaica and they feared it and felt most safe in the rural parts of the country.

It was clear that even if they did not experience violence themselves the participants knew a relative or a close friend who had. This was reinforced by the mass media that constantly report violence that takes place each day. As one participant put it, “ Every night you see on TV, and the newspapers, people get shot” (Clarks Town, girls, 13-15 years).

It was not surprising that many participants in the group in which the researcher participated were able to cite examples of some particularly brutal acts of violence shown on the news the previous day, including the bodies of a mother and her child chopped up by her deranged partner. Was it necessary to go into such graphic detail to deal adequately with the story? What are the psychological impacts on adolescents of exposure to this constant diet of violence either personally or in the mass media?

f. Dealing with the Violence.

Given the level of violence experienced at home, school and community, what strategies do adolescents employ to help them cope? Participants were asked how they handled violent incidents and dealt with violence in their communities. The order in which the strategies are set out is no indication of their priority.

The first of the major strategy, discerned in the discussions is “normalisation”. This entails developing a tolerance by a process of osmosis due to the constant exposure to violence. As one student puts it “You get use to it miss”(Melrose Junior High School, boys13-15 years). Another student perceptively set out where she feels this normalisation process begins; she points out that “Some small children actually see their father beating their mother or vice versa, the mother beating the father and they grow up with it saying ‘ that is how the world is’(Melrose Junior High School, girls, 13-15 years).

The second discernable strategy is the adoption of the Jamaican “three monkey rule”, namely see no evil, hear no evil, and most importantly of all, speak no evil. This strategy is succinctly captured by a male participant in the Herbert Morrison School (13-15 years) focus group. As he puts it “ Miss you see man stab and kill a next man miss yu jus nah si nuttin jus hold yu head straight an go so. Caah as you an him nuh in a nuttin him nah go trouble you.” Failure to adopt this strategy could be fatal as one of the participants in the Herbert Morrison (boys, 13-15 years) points out “ Miss yu fi see dem a do it an jus si down(hold your head down,so the perpetrator see

that you are not looking) an also see man a do 'im sumptin and nu say nuttin or 'im pull 'im gun on you.”

This last strategy is closely connected to the strategy of avoidance. It is interesting to note that when participants were asked about how they see their future involvement in crime and violence they all expressed a strong desire to get away from the violence and to find ways of not getting mixed up in it. Their intended future strategy is to:

- Stay away from bad company (Clarks Town, boys, 10-12 years)
- Stay away from mix-up and stay away from conflict (Clarks Town, boys 13-15)

This desire for peace is captured by the young man who stated firmly that “ me a go live a calm life, me no mix up” (agreement among students to what was said was noted by transcriber).

If all the above strategies fail then you have to fall back on the ‘ backative’ (support)of your family because it means you will be in a war and when you are in a war “ Your whole family jump in” (Melrose Junior High School, boys, 13-15 years). One can also fall back on the ‘backative’ of your ‘corner crew’. This strategy is outlined by one of the older adolescent in the Montego Bay (boys, 16-19 years) group, in the following terms “Mek me talk ‘bout me now. Let me tell you how I live. I have gotten into a lot of fights and I live in the community where yuh have the ‘ravers men’ and the “Renegade men’. Me and the Ravers man are friends; dem on my lane, dem is the bad man in the area. So me deal wit dem; so nobody going to romp with me”. Levy (2001) points out that corner crews are not mainly orientated to crime, as the criminal gang is, and certainly within the August Town context are the principal force for peace. The corner crew he argues is “brought together by geography and the desire for ‘company’, and solidarity. Its principal activities are ‘reasoning’ together - especially about the injustices of the system-smoking together-often ganja-playing dominoes or Ludi or football, going in twos and threes to a game, dances or a movie”

g. Impact of Violence

The methodology adopted for this research did not really allow for detailed interrogation of how adolescents thought continuous exposure to violence impacted on them. The discussion triggered by the question “In what ways do you think violence has affected you?” did throw some light on this area of adolescent experience. The overall sentiment expressed by the adolescents was that

of vulnerability as there was no place in which they felt totally safe. This sentiment is captured in the following exchanges between the moderator and students in the Herbert Morrison school focus group (boys, 13-15 years):

Moderator: OK, so where do you feel safest?
Student: no where miss.
Student: no weh no safe.
Student: No where no safe caah sometime yu all in a yu yard and 'fraid.
Moderator: You don't feel safe at home?
Student: Not even a church, miss.
Student: All when you in a yu room lock up a night....all a sleep.

Many students said they felt safest at home with their mother (family) and in the country (with a grandmother for example). They also felt relatively safe in the other sites in which they spend the major part of their time, such as in the community in which they live and at the school they attend but as described above, safety in these sites is a very relative concept as the comments are heavily qualified.

A major impact of violence was the restriction on movement and the hindrance experienced from doing some of the ordinary things that adolescents normally do as part of their development. Taking the bus to school, for example, becomes a challenge and sometime when the violence rages they cannot even get to school. As one student put it "Sometimes wi don't go to school, wi hav' fi wait till the violence cool off" (Melrose Junior High, girls, 11-12 years). It also severely restricts the type of extra-curricular activities that their uptown peers take for granted, for example:

" We can't get involved into sports like sugar an'sugar sun" (Melrose Junior High, girls, 11-12 years)

" You can't go dancing, miss" (ibid)

" It makes you feel not comfortable. Yuh waan go out somewhere go have fun wid yu frien dem a game shop an' yu caan gho 'cause bare shot a fire out deh. So it nuh mek yu feel happy, miss." (Melrose Junior High, boys, 13-15 years).

Even the playing of a game on the street in one's community can suddenly become fraught with potential and unforeseen dangers. As a young female participant explains "Friday mi an' mi cousin was playing a game an' dancing to music an' a black car drive up wid a bigman inna it an'

say mi msu' come dance fi him.³⁹ An' mi an' mi cousin run away, miss.'⁴⁰ The general violent atmosphere even impacts on what young female adolescents feel they can safely wear, without fear of sexual harassment, as one points out "You can't wear a pair of shorts, miss. Di bwoy dem look unda yu an' big man too."

The psychological impact of the exposure to violence is a theme that emerged across the sites, age groups and genders. Again the methodology does not allow us to make any definitive statements but there is enough here to merit further research of a more detailed nature. Even within this rather public setting adolescents were willing to share with us some of the more personal experiences of the impact of violence on them, particularly those in the younger age group. In responding to the question as to how the violence affects them, the following statements made by participants from Melrose Junior High School (boys, 10-12 years) are illustrative of the type of responses:

- ❑ *"Mi caan sleep at nights"*
- ❑ *"I dream about it"*
- ❑ *"Mi wake up sweating"*
- ❑ *"Mi worry a lot"*
- ❑ *"I feel afraid"*
- ❑ *"Mi have to sleep and watch"*

The sheer magnitude of what we ask our adolescents to cope with emotionally is captured in the following two extracts, the first from Corinaldi Primary School (boys, 10-12 years) and the second from Norman Manley High School (girls, 16-19 years).

Student: A man run a man down with a machete and chop him up.
Student: This man run down a man, an' kill him.
Moderator: so how seeing this killing make you feel?
Student: Two of my neighbours went for a man with a machete and chop off his hand and one foot.
Student: He dead?
Moderator: So how that make you feel
Student: Scared, I was afraid to go to my bed and could not stop thinking about it.

³⁹ See Williams, S. (1999) where she describes how once a week in a well known square in Western Jamaica Young girls parade for the club owners to choose them to dance in their go-go clubs or for 'big men' to come in their big car and take them away for the weekend.

⁴⁰ This has to be seen in the context of the booming dance hall clubs that recruit young girls to dance in them, particularly in the tourist areas. (Williams, S, 1998. Dunn. L. 1999)

In this second extract the long-term impact of exposure to domestic violence and the general insecurity in which some adolescents live are hinted at.

- Student: Mi see my father beat my mother and mi grow and that hurt mi all these years⁴¹.*
- Student: A boy shoot a boy inna 'im head near my yard.*
- Student: Bad man shoot a man kill 'im on the spot*
- Student: Dem come fire shot inna the school an' di teacher dem hafi gho under the desk.*
- Student: Dem shoot a man on our playfield.*
- Moderator: When you see all this violent behaviour, how it make you feel?*
- Student: I don't feel safe.*
- Student: I don't feel safe anywhere.*
- Student: Don't feel safe at school, miss, because when bad man ready dem ju' walk in a dhu what dem waan dhu.*

There is enough evidence in the literature to suggest that such exposure to violence is detrimental to the development of individual adolescents and to society in general. Samms-Vaughan (2000:4) alerts us to the fact that family violence and child abuse are positively correlated with subsequent deviant behaviour and poor academic outcomes. She concludes her discussion on the exposure to violence by pointing out that:

“Regardless of the place, or whether children are witnesses or victims, exposure to violence is associated with specific psychological symptoms (Singer, 1995) and abnormal social, emotional and cognitive development (Richters, 1993).”

In her paper to the workshop on Understanding Risks and Promoting Healthy Behaviour in Adolescence Jackson (2000) endorses the above point and adds that children who witnessed violence were also more likely to be involved in the commission of violent acts themselves; similarly those children who are victims of child sexual abuse are more likely to be later abusers themselves (Milbourn 1995).

h. Adolescents perception of strategies to reduce the level of violence.

The following question was asked to get insight into what adolescents felt would make successful intervention strategies to reduce not only the level of adolescent violence but also the general level of violence in the society. The most common suggestion put forward was succinctly stated by one of the participants in the Montego Bay (boys, 16-17 years) in the following way “ Miss, more work”. The dislocation between education and employment, alluded to by Anderson (1998)

⁴¹ Author's emphasis

is picked up by a participant in the Herbert Morrison (girls, 13-15 years) focus group when she expands on the 'more work' theme above:

“Miss yu see some violent act mis a because ahn say for instance miss I go University miss and come out with mi diploma and all dat stuff miss...an have a family miss an caan get a job miss I will go out there and feel and even kick sometimes even push drugs (student: yea man go push an mek money dough) a go University an get a diploma fi get money an now yu caan get a job miss and some other under qualified person go get the job”.

No thoughts here about the intrinsic value of education. This is, understandably, a utilitarian perception of the value of education.

The link between youth unemployment and violence is unambiguously articulated by a participant in the Montego Bay group (males, 16-19 years) in the following way: “ I think if young people have money in dem pocket, dem hardly think about violence.” The same participant sets out what he thinks the government need to do in equally clear terms: “What government got to do is projects for ghetto areas, because if there is no money or work, trouble.” The sophistication of the discussion is illustrated when another participant in the same group points out that simply providing more jobs may not be the panacea implied above. “ But you have some lazy people man; and government caan find job for everybody”.

Another institution flagged up for intervention is the family. It was seen above that the family is a site in which adolescents experienced what they considered to be harsh punishment and in which they witnessed domestic violence. It was, at the same time, a place where many felt the safest and certainly where they expected to find most of their support. They would like to enhance the positive features of the family. The importance of the family in reducing the level of violence is captured in the following quote by one of the participants (Montego Bay, mixed, 16-19 years): “ All the violence start at the family level, if the child see father beating the mother, he will do the same when he grows up. So the majority of times, the violence start in the family.” Another participant in the same group put it more succinctly: “ Yes, we have to bring back the family together”.

The difficulty of achieving this is pointed out by another participant who immediately responds to the above statement with “That’s hard.”

Another institution requiring urgent attention if the level of violence is to be reduced is the police. The point is extracted from the discussion in the Montego Bay, Corinaldi primary (girls, 11-12 years)

- Student: The police love to behave different....*
Student: Look what happened in St. Cathrine.....
Student: Braeton, the Braeton shooting.
Student: The police has to change, one hit a man with his cycle and kick the woman in her chest. They too violent.
Student: And on the news they find four police with cocaine
Student: And police rape girl after telling her to come in the van
Student: Police has to change to help violence to change
Student: They don't care about us
Student: They want to live big life and the police with the cocaine I would have them arrested and..... they just shoot up the house, that's not right.

It is exceedingly difficult to build a community policing strategy if this is the view of the police force held by future adult citizens.

In addition to the changes needed in institutions, adolescents need to bring about changes in themselves and need support to do so as follows: “more special counseling groups for teenagers, like the VIP” (Montego Bay, boys,16-19 years) is asked for. This is especially required for dysfunctional families, as pointed out by a participant in the same group: “Young people need people they can talk to, show there should have some people where the parents are not playing a good role.” (agreement)⁴²

It is felt that such assistance, in addition to youth clubs and community groups, will help young people develop the necessary strength of character to stay away from drugs and violence. In the following quote (Corinaldi Primary, boys,10-12 years) even the traditional male socialisation process is challenged:

- Student: Miss you have to a mind of your own, don't let other boost you, so boys have to get mental strength, not physical strength.*
Student: Encourage them to join up boy scout and community groups.
Student: Police youth club and sports to get mental strength.

In fact, the girls are asking the boys to change their very nature, since they are seen to be the ones most involved in violence. An adolescent female in the Clarks Town focus group (13-15 years)

⁴² Transcriber's note.

points out the basic difference between boys and girl when she states that: “ Some girls fight, but boys fight all the time.”

The other strategies flagged up to help reduce the level of violence are summarized below:

- “More love for church and build relationship with Jesus, and they will change” (Montego Bay, boys, 16-19 years).
- “Stay away from bad company (Clarks Town, boys, 10-12 years)”
- “Don’t get drunk and smoke ganja” (Clarks Town, girls, 13-15 years).
- More respect for pupils from many teachers (see teacher/pupil conflict above.)

It is important that we take some of these recommendations seriously, not only because they merit consideration but because if we ask adolescents to articulate the problems, they must be given the opportunity to articulate some of the possible solutions to problems which impact negatively on their lives daily. **Structures need to be put in place that can effectively involve them in the implementation of those strategies they have outlined above.** Levy alerts us to the potential that such an approach can reap if the changes taking place in August Town could be replicated elsewhere. He ask us to note:

“That the spiritual transformation of society, which everyone increasingly calls for, has begun where such movements often begin- at the bottom of the social ladder. It is young crew members, tradesmen and women of the inner city who have begun to overturn patterns of behaviour let loose on society by political leaders and largely ignored, if not blessed, by the churches. It is, they would all admit, only a beginning. Its weaknesses are palpable. But it is a beginning.” (Levy, 2000:6)

Conclusions and Recommendations.

As pointed out above the methodology used to collect the data for this piece of research does not allow conclusions of a scientific nature to be made from the findings. It is proposed therefore, to compare the major finding from this piece of exploratory research, with the findings from recent studies on adolescents’ experience and perception of violence in Jamaica. It is hoped that such an exercise will enable us to see how far the findings from this research corroborate or, more accurately, resonate with, the findings from the literature. Suggestions as to the implications for strategic intervention will also be outlined in bold at the end of each section.

Perception of violence. There is extensive overlap in the perception of violence outlined in Meeks-Gardner (1999) and Chambers (1997). Further dimensions of violence as unlawful and “warish” behaviour arise from this study.

This provides a basis for early education on the rationale for the rule of law, on the concept of order and the “common good”, and hence for the respect required for the law that could help to slow the slide in the society towards lawlessness.

Causes of violence. There was also extensive overlap in the literature in the triggers identified as leading to violence. Verbal abuse, revenge/retaliation and the gaining of ‘stripes’ being identified as the main triggers. It is interesting to note that revenge motive was seen as being very strong, in that there was almost consensus in all the groups that retaliation was legitimate and anyone who did not retaliate would be picked on and seen as a coward. This is contrary to Meeks-Gardner finding which found that only 10% of her sample was of this opinion. The quest for ‘stripes’ illustrated clearly the acceptance, and necessity, of aggression/violence as key to survival and social advancement in the adolescent and adult world.

This signals the great need for increased public education in general, and with adolescents in particular, on non-violent techniques of conflict resolution and on the concept ‘restorative’ justice. The outreach work in promoting this concept amongst the schools and local communities in Hanover by the Hanover disputes Resolution Committee⁴³, needs to be supported and extended to other parishes in the country.

Exposure to violence. This research corroborates the high levels of violence to which adolescents are exposed in their daily lives, identified in all the recent research into this phenomenon. The sites of high exposure are:

- The family, in the form of witnessing domestic violence, child abuse, harsh corporal punishment and the mass media.
- The School, in the form of peer violence and teacher pupil conflict.
- The Community, in the form of witnessing a wide range of violent incidences, from assaults to murder.

⁴³ This project received funding from the Jamaica Social Investment fund. The objective of the project is to promote the adoption of alternative dispute resolution techniques in local communities and schools.

This suggests the need for urgent, and extensive, campaigning with parents starting from the child's early years: in particular, that which focuses on the rearing of young children in ways that minimise the need for harsh disciplinary measures. One of the forthcoming publications of the Profiles Project, a handbook for parents entitled Raising a small child in Jamaica, is a useful example of the type of work needed in this area, one which could be extended to include the needs of children in middle childhood and adolescence.⁴⁴

Similarly there is need to increase the training of teachers on how to maintain classroom discipline without resorting to corporal punishment or violent confrontations with pupils. There is need to build on the momentum given by the PALS and "Change from Within"⁴⁵ project to this approach in schools.

There is also a basic need for security within schools so that pupils can feel that there is a place where they can get respite from the violence of their local community and homes. It must be recognized that how a school is managed does make a difference. Indeed Rutter's (1990) research in the UK alerts us to the fact that effective school organization has beneficial effects on the behaviour of children and young people. Teacher/Principals cannot simply say that it is the poor behaviour of pupils that makes it difficult to manage a school.

The Impact of violence on adolescents. There is no shortage of data on the negative impact of violence on adolescents. Local studies support the finding of the deleterious emotional and psychological effects of violence to be found in the wider literature in this area. The strength of the impact is captured in the fact that many of the participants in this study felt brave enough to share publicly the fear and anxiety induced by their exposure to high levels of violence. For example, a young man sharing how the witnessing of violence between his parents had "Hurt mi all these years". Imagine the grief that many adolescents, who witness or hear of the death of a relative or close friend, also have to be deal with.

⁴⁴ The Profiles Project of the Caribbean Child Development Centre, UWI. The handbook has been written by Maureen Samms-Vaughan.

⁴⁵ Change From Within and PALS, in different ways are projects that have been effective in reducing the level of violence in our schools and are worthy of support.

There is an urgent need for adolescents to have access to counselling services to deal with the emotional and psychological trauma caused by exposure to violence. Failure to provide such services will only guarantee the continuation of the cycle of violence.

Fear of, and ambivalence towards, the police. This research endorses the finding of Meeks et al and Chambers. Many participants were able to give examples of what they believed to be police corruption and it was felt that the police were themselves responsible for some of the violence. Even if the adolescents did not have direct experience of violence from the police they more often than not had friends or relative who had and they certainly saw many examples of police using violence on the television. Indeed the Braeton shootings in which seven young men were shot in an alleged shoot out with the police did not go un-remarked by the participants in several of the focus groups. There is evidence to support ambivalence towards the police. For example, Amnesty International recently pointed out that “Human rights groups have repeatedly documented the torture and ill-treatment of children in police lock-ups.” (2001:38). Expanding on this point the report outlines some of these abuses in the following way:

“Children have been detained for long periods, often on minor charges and sometimes without charge, and have frequently been detained alongside adults, where they have been placed at risk of sexual and physical abuse from other inmates. In 1995 the UN committee on the Rights of the Child expressed its concern at reports of lengthy pre-trial arrests and detention of children in police lock-ups.” (ibid:38)

In 1999 Human Rights Watch documented instances of severe violation of children’s rights by the police including “severe beatings, mock executions and rape” (quoted in Amnesty International, 2001:38)

The police need to urgently consider the reasons why adolescents have this fear, ambivalence and disrespect for the police. This should be of concern for an organisation that needs the support of the public to function efficiently. It must also be borne in mind that this is an organisation that has a part of its mission statement ‘to serve and protect’. The provision of support to youth clubs whilst laudable cannot compensate for the damage done by systematic abuse of adolescents’ rights. They are ‘Tomorrows Adults’ and failure to win their hearts and minds today has severe consequences for the future.

Drug taking. The prevalence of drug taking did not emerge from the focus group discussions. The VIP Base Line Study does indicate a high prevalence rate of ganja smoking in the three sites in which our focus groups were held. However, our research clearly indicated the great ease with which drugs can be purchased. There was consensus in all the groups that there was easy access to ganja. It could be purchased at the local shop, or from any number of local persons. Adolescents saw parents and other adults freely consuming it; it was seen as being a pretty normal activity. It appears that cocaine was only slightly more difficult to purchase. Many participants felt that the drugs trade was one of the principal causes of the violence that impacts their lives on a daily basis. Yet they appreciated that it also provided one of the avenues for social mobility. Young women experienced great pressure to act as couriers for drug dealers. The number of young Jamaican women in British prisons for carrying offences is already a cause for concern, not only for the young women themselves but also for the young children left behind in Jamaica.

There is an urgent need for a public education campaign, aimed specifically at young women, warning them of the dangers and implications of becoming drugs couriers.

Adult responsibility and the changing role of the state

Adolescents are not perceived by adult society as citizens with rights. A continued public campaign needs to be launched around this issue. We need to enlist the support of parents and teachers in such a campaign. Brown alerts us to the implications of empowering parents to become advocates for child rights, in the following terms:

“ Parents should be the ones empowered to become strong advocates for their children’s right empowered by affordable child-care, parenting education and support groups, counselling services, continuing education opportunities and accessible training for the world of work.” (2001:33).

Brown (2001) correctly argues that the changes necessary for child rights to be realized cannot be done without the commitment of the state. There is no place for the minimum state when it comes to the securing of child rights. As she points out:

“The state needs minimally to commit to a framework of support that links necessary legislative supports with critical implementation agencies and resources.” (ibid:33).

We have not seen this minimum commitment from the state realized as yet. Indeed from the literature and research, adult society in general and the state in particular have failed to implement in any meaningful way Article 19 of the CRC⁴⁶. There is a need, therefore, for a social mobilization strategy that seeks societal consensus around a Jamaican Charter for Children that would set out the conditions necessary to ensure that every child has a safe childhood.

A practical way forward is for UNICEF and UNFPA to share the findings of this work with the relevant agencies working with adolescents and with groups of adolescents. Participants of such a consultation process would be asked not only to comment on the findings of all the different parts of this research project but also to advise on the most appropriate, and effective interventions based on:

- The evidence presented.
- The effectiveness of existing interventions and strategies.
- The readiness or capacity of agencies in the field to take on the work needed

The overall objective of such a consultation process would be to identify collectively the strategies and campaigns that would bring about the ‘sea change’ necessary in the wider society, to make the difference needed in adolescents lives.

⁴⁶ See page 3 above for the text of Article 19

Table One

Source: Stone, C (1988) *Crime and Violence: Socio-Political Implications*

FIGURE 1: CRIME RATES PER 100,000 OF POPULATION

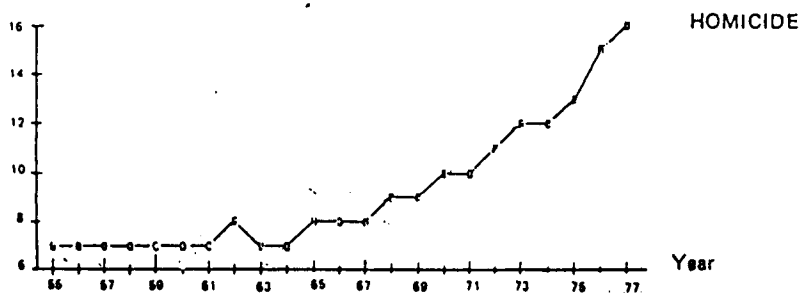
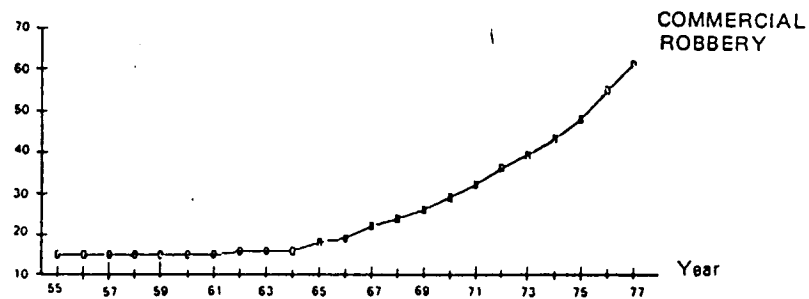
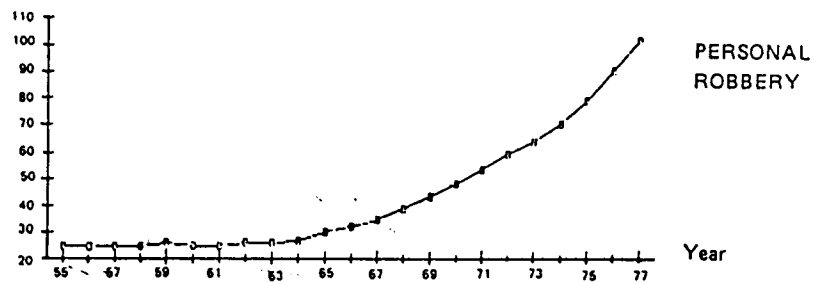
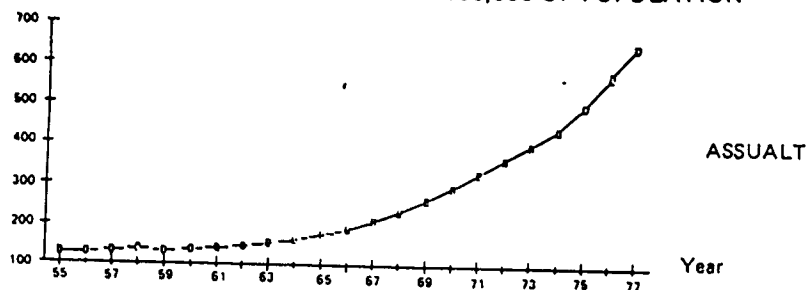


TABLE THREE
AGE GROUP AND GENDER OF PERSONS ARRESTED FOR MAJOR CRIMES, 1999

AGE GROUP	MURDER		RAPE MALE	CARNAL ABUSE MALE	ROBBERY MALE	TOTAL	
	MALE	FEMALE					
13-15	5	2	5	12	14	25	63
16-19	97	2	135	73	68	249	624
20-25	192	5	175	94	55	346	867
26-30	135	4	160	65	41	286	691
31-35	50	4	80	36	30	169	369
36-40	25	2	28	22	11	48	136
41-45	17	2	7	10	8	22	66
46-50	4	1	3	4	2	1	15
51+	2	2	2	1	4	3	14
TOTAL	527	24	595	317	233	1,149	2,845

Note: No females were arrested for shooting, robbery, rape and carnal abuse in 1999.

Source: Jamaica Constabulary Force, Planning and Research Division

TABLE FOUR
REASONS FOR WHICH JUVENILES APPEARED BEFORE THE COURTS
1996 - 1999

	1996		1997		1998		1999		
	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL (1999)
Murder	5	1	7	1	2	0	5	1	6
Manslaughter	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Robbery/Robbery with Aggravation (a)	24	2	8	0	2	0	2	0	2
Rape and Other Sexual Offences	68	0	99	0	85	0	94	2	96
Assault occasioning bodily harm	80	42	94	35	74	30	100	41	141
Wounding/Shooting/Breach of Firearms Law	145	72	142	62	146	61	180	69	249
Burglary	17	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Larceny	160	29	154	16	130	15	109	12	121
Unlawful Possession	3	0	5	0	8	0	3	0	3
Arson	2	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	2
Breach of Road Traffic Law	6	30	8	25	18	17	16	4	20
Malicious Destruction of Property	31	18	25	10	29	10	38	6	44
Breach of Dangerous Drugs	45	8	56	5	67	7	80	4	84
Receiving Stolen Goods	4	3	8	3	13	1	4	0	4
Breaking and entering/larceny	72	11	53	3	49	4	48	0	48
In need of Care/Protection Variation of									
Order/Breach of Probation Order	436	457	433	478	360	433	390	480	870
Minor Offences/Others (b)	86	75	62	56	51	47	86	61	147
TOTAL	1,186	748	1,157	694	1,034	625	1,157	680	1,837

a - Other includes indecent assault and carnal abuse

b - Includes gambling, suspected persons, child abandonment and fraudulent conversion

Source: Department of Correctional Services

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Females 16 – 19 years, Montego Bay
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Girls 13 – 15 years old, Herbert Morrison's
Girls, 16-19 years old, Norman Manley High, Kingston.
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Males, 10 – 12 years old, Clarks Town.
Girls 11 – 12 years old, Clarks Town.
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